

An abstract painting by Odilon Redon. In the upper center, a large, dark, circular face with a white, stylized expression is set against a pale, yellowish, textured background. Below this, two figures are depicted in the lower right foreground, standing on a dark, reddish-brown ground. The figures are rendered in dark, expressive brushstrokes, with one figure appearing to wear a white head covering. The background is a mix of warm, earthy tones with visible brushwork.

EVERY NIGHT I SEND YOU FLOWERS

TANKA
GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK

IN RESPONSE TO THE ART OF ODILON REDON

Gabriel Rosenstock is a bilingual poet, tankaist, novelist, haikuist, short story writer, playwright, essayist and translator.

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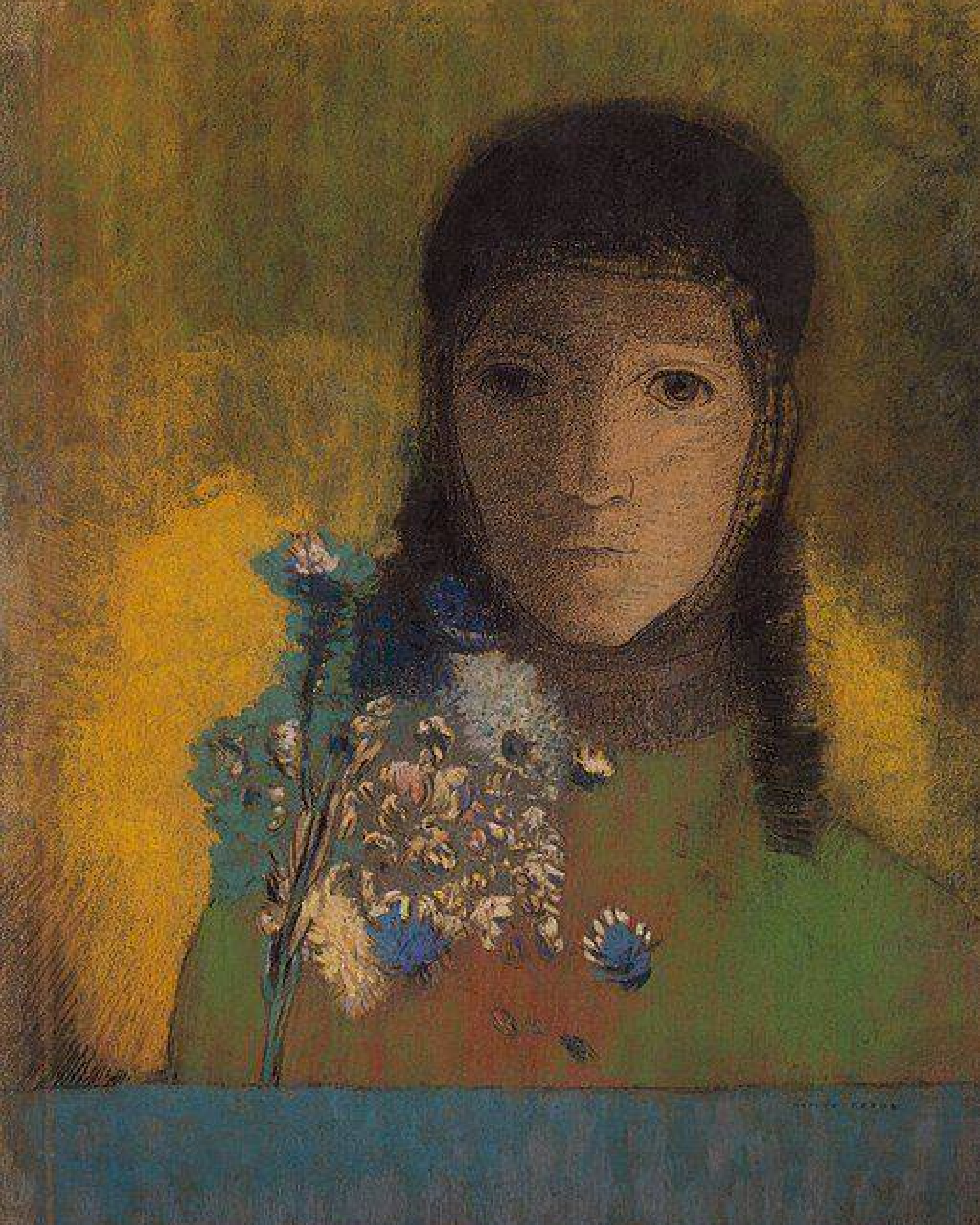
Is mian leis an údar buíochas a ghabháil leis an
gComhairle Ealaíon as Sparánacht
a chur ar fáil dó a chuirfidh ar a chumas tanka Gaeilge a
chleachtadh agus a shaothrú.

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ongoing experiments in Irish-language tanka.

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I

seans nach eol duit
gur uaimse a tháinig
blátha fiáine seo na hoíche
níl fhios agam féin é
seans gur uaitse a tháinig – domsa

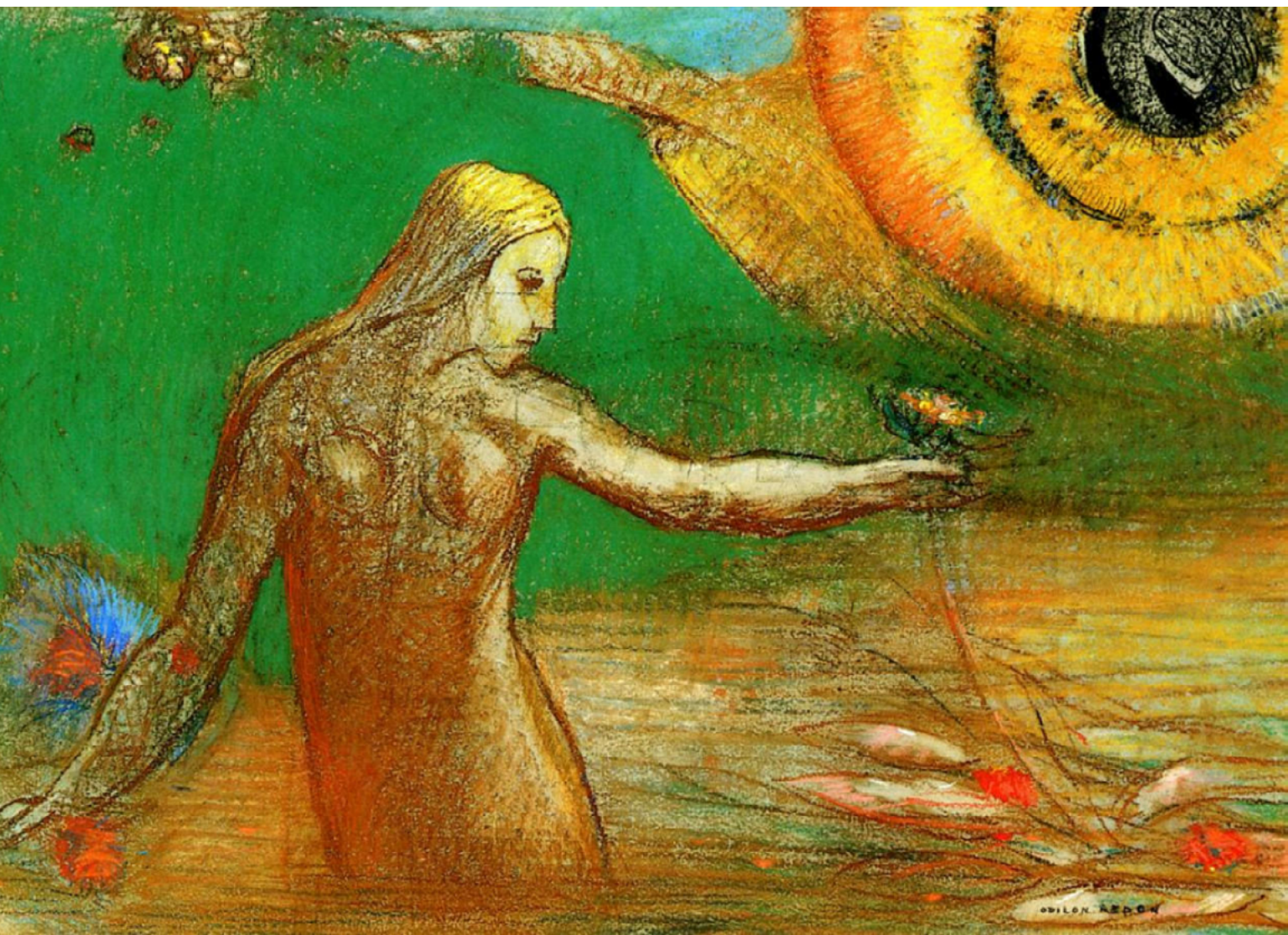
*perhaps You do not know
they came from me
wild flowers of the night
i do not know myself
perhaps they came from You – for me*



II

siúil leis an mBúda
i measc na mbláth
oidí dósan is dúinne
a gcumhracht is a ndath
milis a meath gach nóiméad

*walk with the Buddha
among flowers
his teachers and ours
their perfume and their hues
moments of sweet decay*



III

is labhair an abhainn
i nguth nár chualamar
leis na cianta
 is foirmíodh gach briathar
 go domhain im' chroí féin

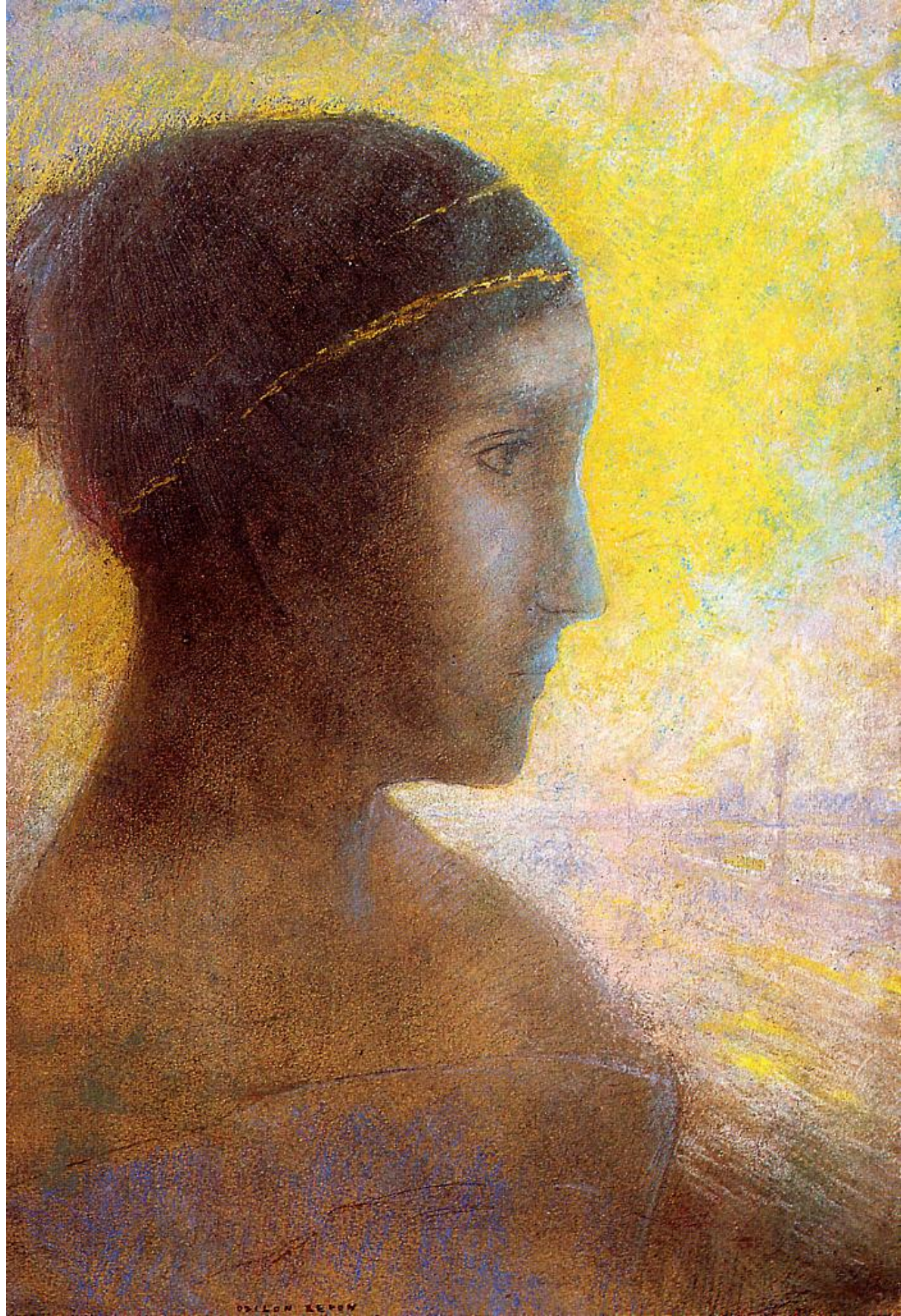
*and the river spoke
in a tongue we have not heard
in over a thousand years
 each word formed
 in the depths of my own heart*



IV

cá ngabham anois
an domhan ar bharr lasrach
á leá os ár gcomhair
san fholús sin
ba chliabhán dúinn fadó

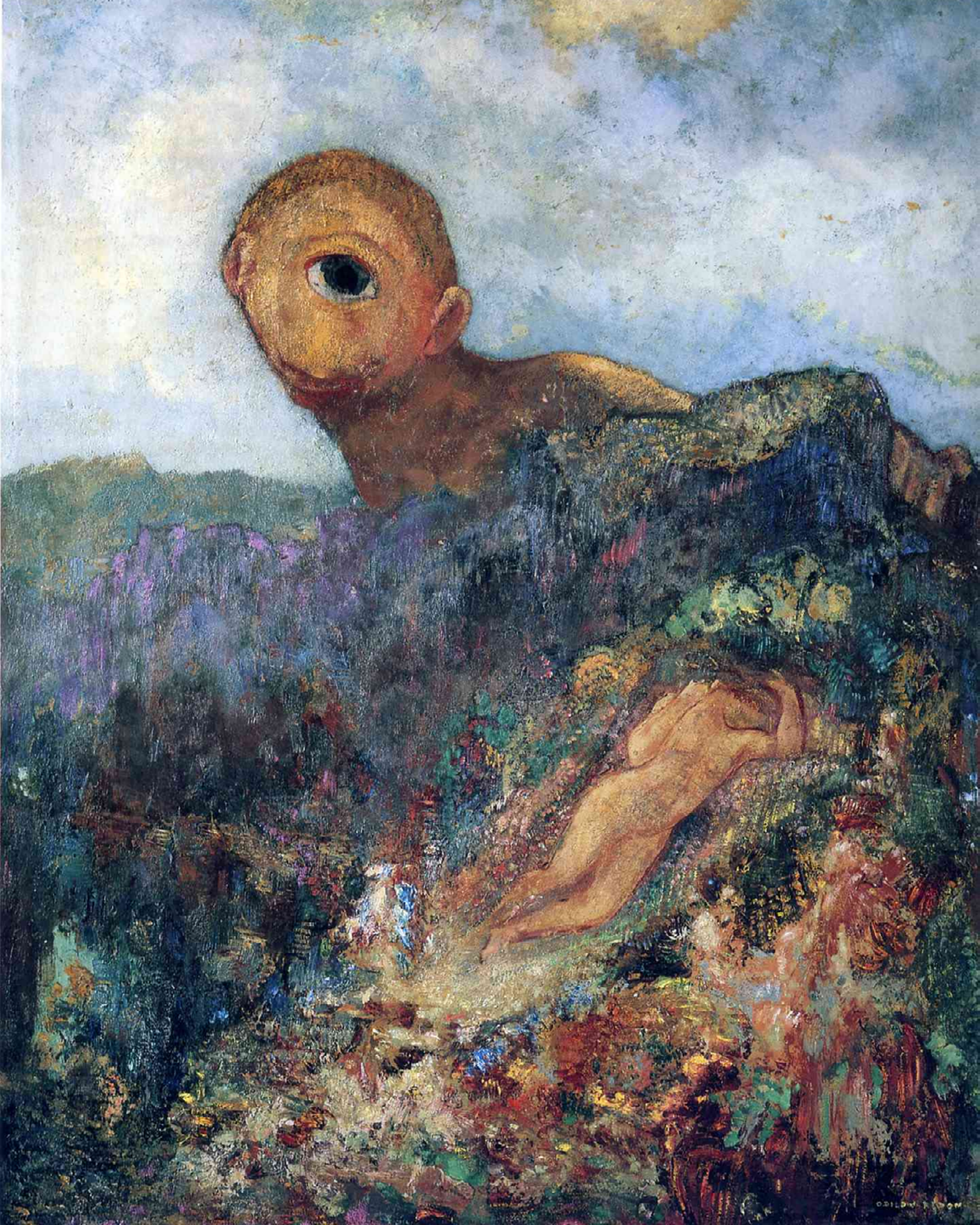
*where is there left to go
a world in flames
see, it fades before our eyes
melts into the nothingness
that cradled our beginning*



V

bhí an uile ní
i súil mo ghrása
ó thús ama
 fíorghrá ag bláthú
 leis na cianta gan fhios dúinn

*in my beloved's eye
all of creation
since the beginning of time
 love takes aeons
 to blossom and be known*



VI

seolaim mo thaibhrimh chugat
is taibhrimh faoi thaibhrimh
grianghraif de m'aigne
 á réaladh go mall
 id' thaibhrimhse go léir

*i send You dreams
dreams about dreams
photographs of my mind
 slowly developing
 in Your endless dreams*



VII

níor fhágamar riamh gairdín Dé
istigh ionainn atá
ceansaigh beach mhallaithe
na smaointe áiféiseacha
is féach, a ghrá – tá sé ann

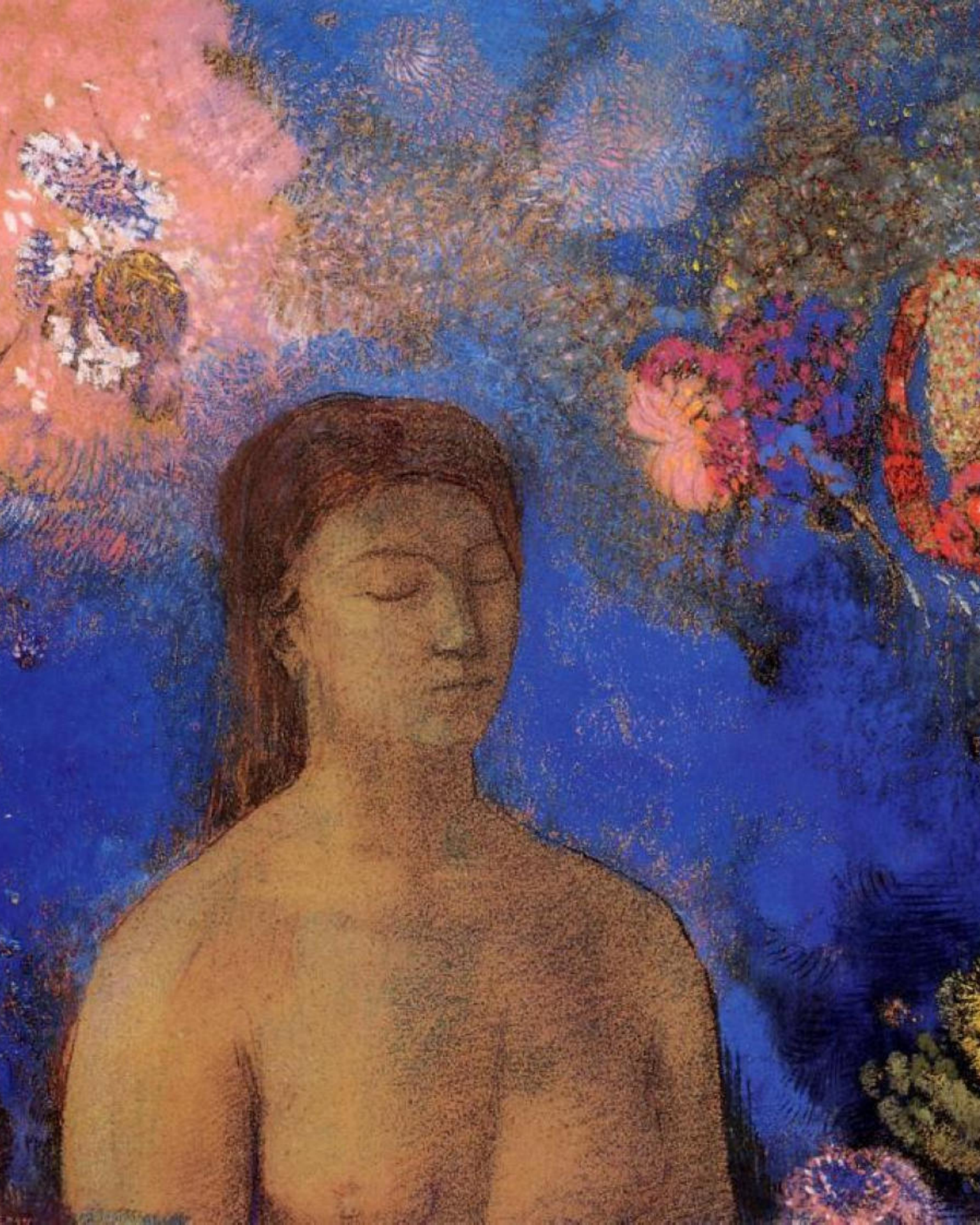
*we never left god's garden
it lies within us
still the frantic bee
of maddening thought
and find it there, beloved*



VIII

má fhágaim inniu nó amárach
seal gairid a bheidh ann
chun aer neimhe a análú
fillfead arís is arís eile
chun tú a adhradh

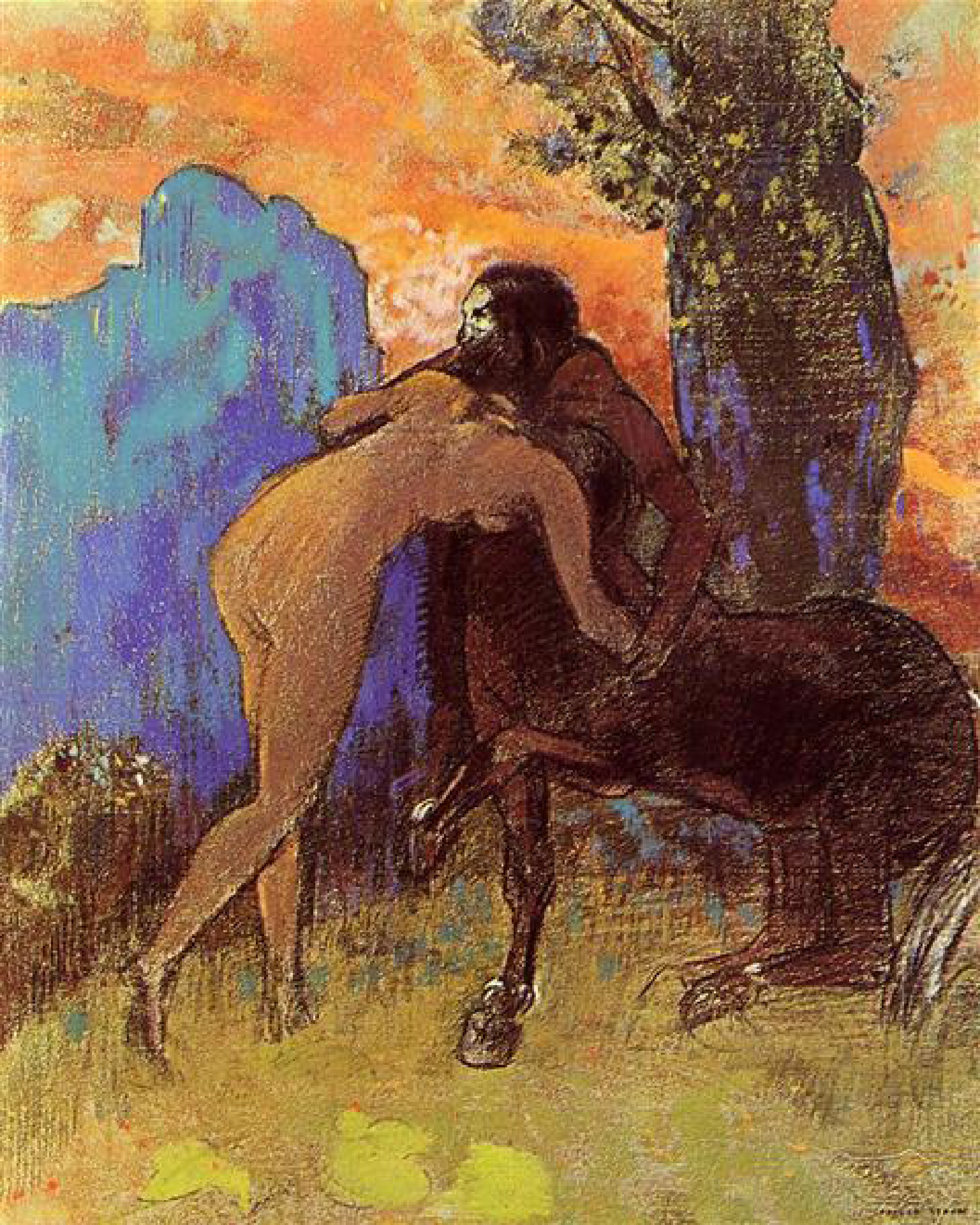
if i leave today or tomorrow
it will be but for a short while
to breathe the air of heaven
returning again
and again to adore You



IX

is tú dúchas
na mbláthanna go léir
saol na rún
ag dúiseacht ionam
peiteal ar pheiteal ar pheiteal

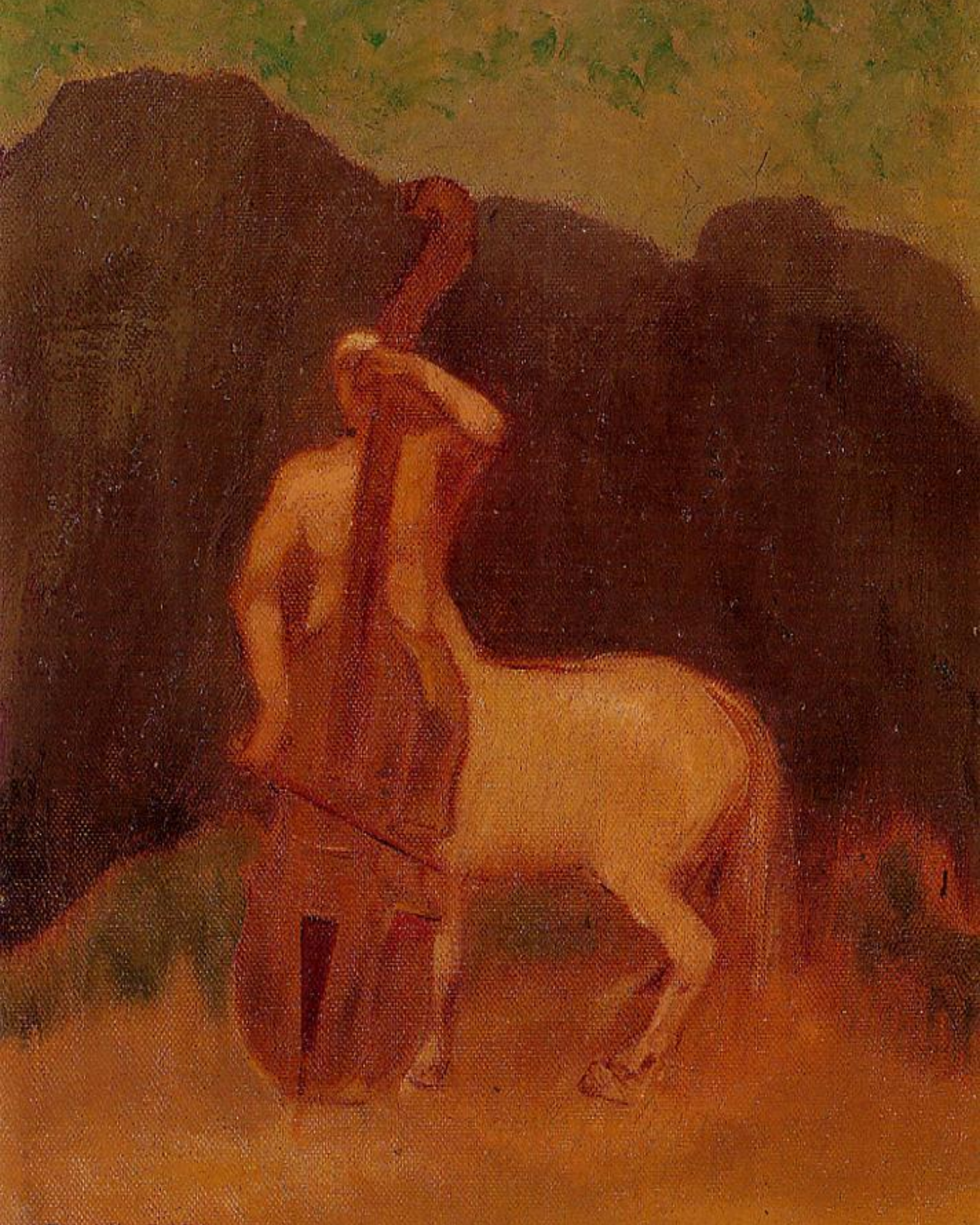
*You are
what every flower is inside
You are the awakening
of my secret life
petal by petal by petal*



X

uaireanta cuimhníonn an cholainn
uirthi féin
is taisceann an chuimhne sin
lig di mhuise
ní mhairfidh an chuimhne i bhfad

*sometimes the body remembers
it is flesh after all
and holds on to that memory
let it be awhile
it will forget all distractions*



XI

nochtraí a chuala mé
i gcríochaibh i gcéin
d'aithníos na nótaí ann
cá hionadh san, a chuid
cumadh gach nóta duitse

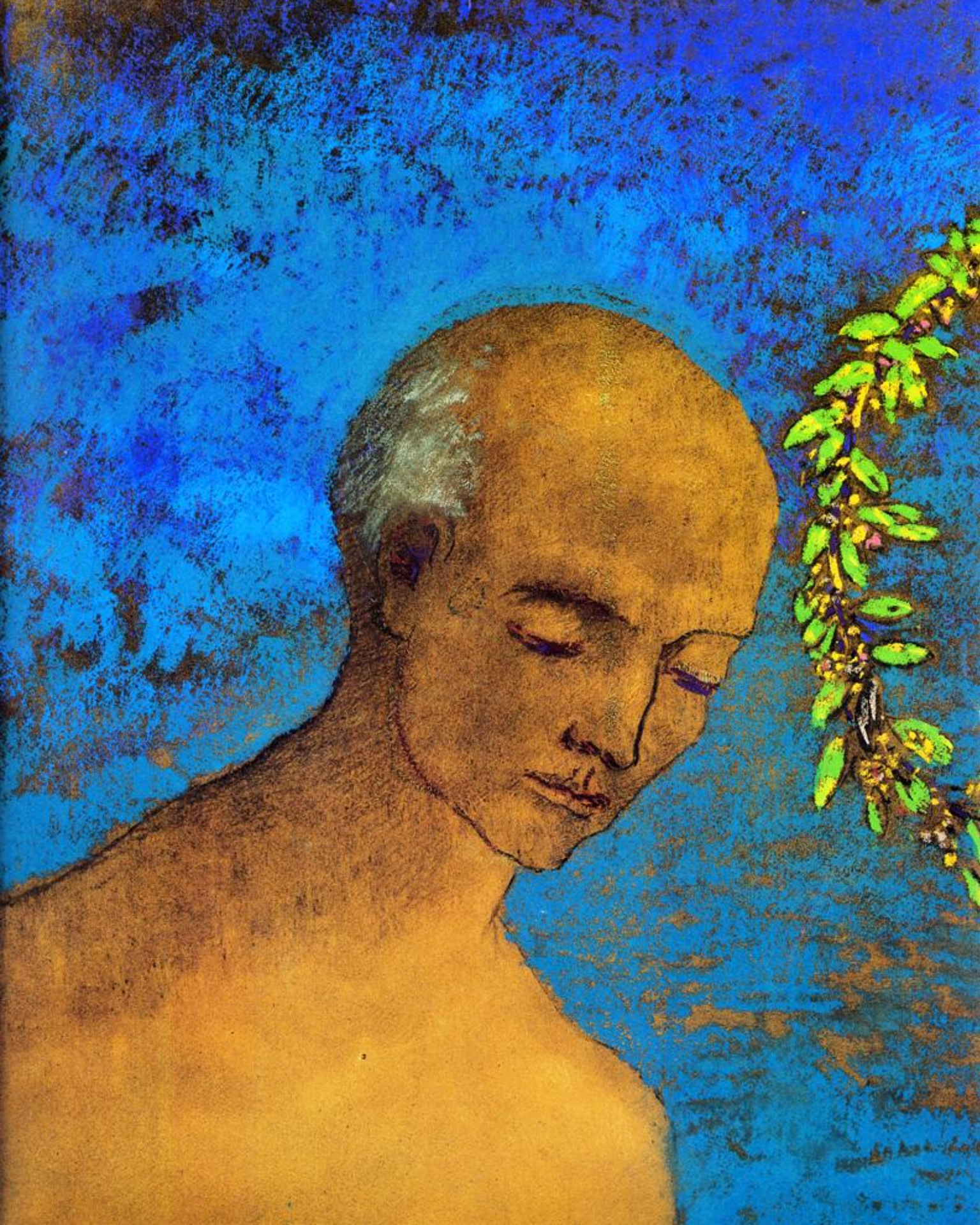
*a nocturne once heard
in a distant land
the notes were familiar
no wonder, beloved
each note was written for You*



XII

seolaim ar an ngaoth iad
mo chuid féileacán – iniúchóirí –
blátha atá foirfe
 ní duitse iad, a chumann
 músclaíonn mion-locht atrua ionat

*i send them out on the wind
butterfly inspectors
flowers that are perfect
 are not for You: one tiny flaw
 awakens Your compassion*



XIII

uaireanta ní bhíonn ionam
ach taisé gan bhrí
nach daonna ar fad é
 cuimhne ar smaointe faoi bhláth
 a roinneas leatsa tráth, a chuid

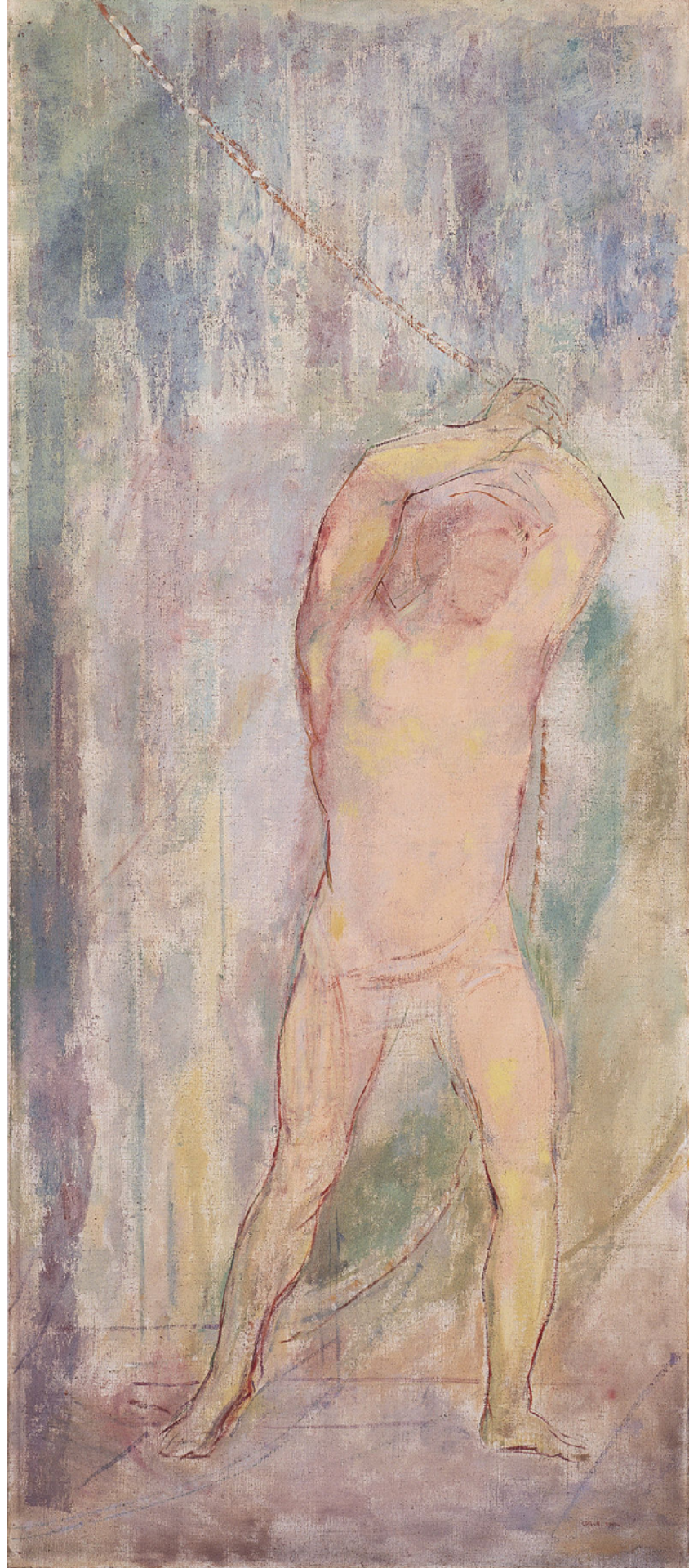
*sometimes i'm nothing
but a wraith
something not quite human
 a memory of flowering thoughts
 once shared with You*



XIV

nuair a phiocaimse blátha dhuit
bíonn nóiníní i gcónaí ann
a ghrian bheag lonrach
soilsigh ár laethanta
go brách na breithe

*when i pick flowers for You
there are always daisies among them
tiny brilliant suns
illuminate our days
forever and ever*



XV

táim im' chlogaire
ar do shon
buaileann na cloig de ló is d'óiche
a shearc, an cur isteach ort é
nílim in ann stopadh

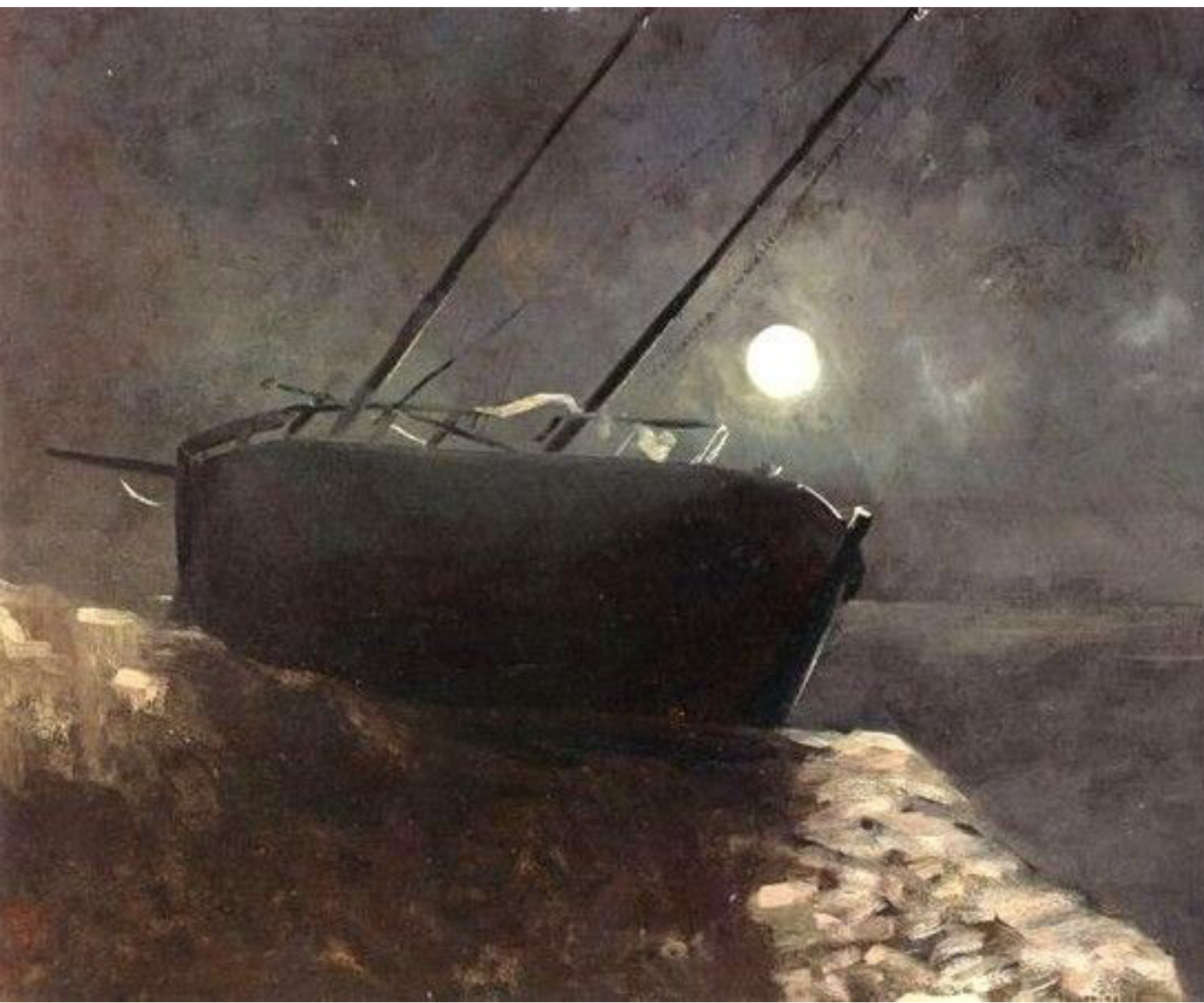
*i have become
a bell ringer for You
day and night the bell tolls
does it keep You from sleep
i cannot, will not, cease*



XVI

nochtann blátha
is léiriú ar d'anam iad
tá dream ann nach bhfeiceann iad
nach eol dóibh faoina gcumhracht
conas san in ainm Chroim

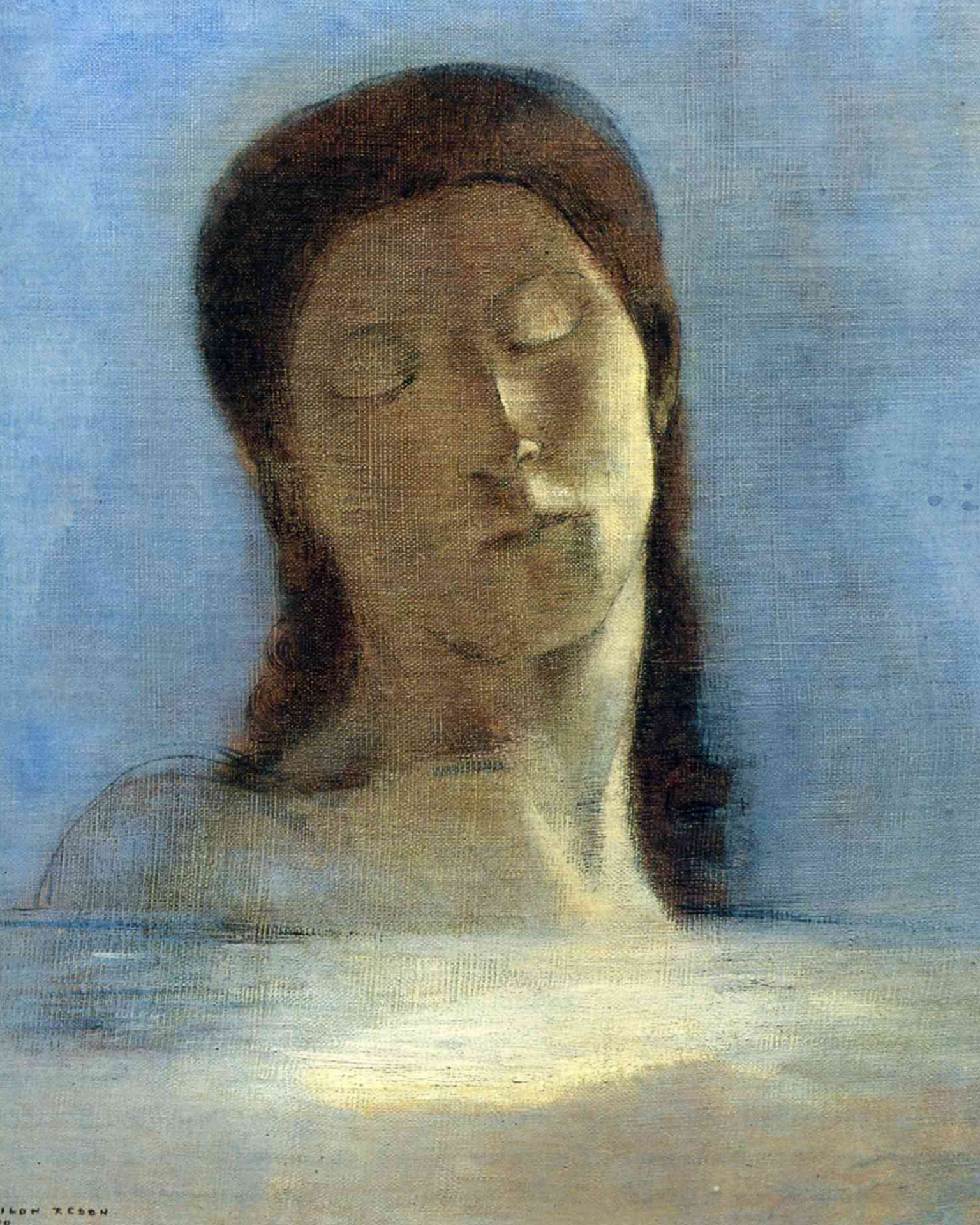
*flowers appear
a manifestation of Your soul
some folks do not even see them
or know of their scent
how on earth can this be*



XVII

tá ár mbád ullamh
bád an fholúis
ní mór dúinn imeacht anois
cén mhoill a bheadh orainn
féach, tá an ghealach réidh

*our boat is ready
the boat of emptiness
we must go now
why wait, beloved
see, the moon awaits us*



XVIII

mo shúile dúnta
chonac thú
is do shúilese dúnta
is aon sinn sa ríocht sin
radharc againn ar a chéile de shíor

*with eyes closed
i have seen You
You, with eyes closed
we are one in that realm
and see each other night and day*



XIX

seo linn ag siúl tríd an mbaile seo
ní fheicfear sinn
ní chloisfear sinn
 má chloisfear
 cé a thuigfeadh ár ngrá neamhshaolta

*come, let's walk through this village
no one will see us
no one will hear us
 and if they do
 who can make sense of unearthly love*



XX

gluaiseann an uile ní sa ghrá
as ar cruthaíodh iad
ar a bhfillfidh siad
mura mbeadh sé amhlaidh
chuirfeadh blátha inár gcoinne

*all things move in love
are created out of love
return to love
if it were not so
flowers would revolt against us*



XXI

cad iad do mhianta
do chuid riachtanas
cad d'fhéadfainn a thabhairt duit
nár thug éinne cheana dhuit
néal ag taisteal

*tell me Your desires
Your needs
what can i give You
that no man has ever given You before
a passing cloud*



XXII

bhís ar strae
i ndán ón meánaois
tháinig mé i gcabhair ort
is mian leat dul ar ais ann
ná téir ann leat féin

*You were lost
in a medieval poem
i rescued You
now You wish to return
do not venture there alone*



XXIII

seolaim blátha chugat gach oíche
ina bhféileacáin chumhra
ar snámh faoi ghealach imníoch
is ligeann a scíth
ar do philiúr bán

*every night i send You flowers
scented butterflies
floating under an anxious moon
until they rest
on Your pale pillow*



XXIV

a shearc
roinnim mo bhuairt
leis an gcrann
 tosnaíonn na duilleoga ag titim
 ceann ar cheann

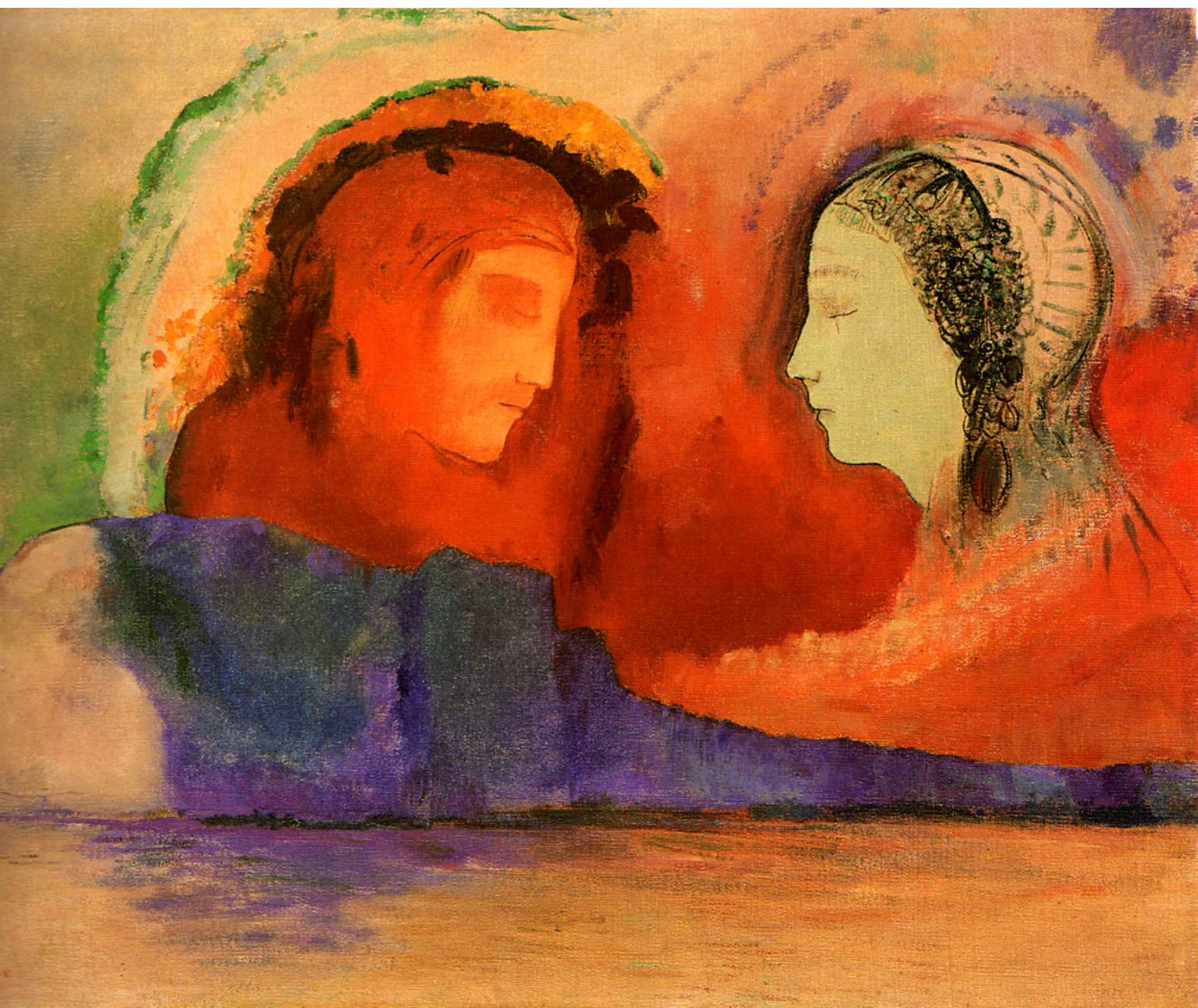
*beloved
to the tree
i whisper my sorrow
 one by one, look
 leaves begin to tumble*



XXV

t'rom do lámh
tá aigéin á lorg agam
caithfidh siad bheith liath
 agus fuar
 dár ndeora goirte araon

*take my hand
i'm in search of oceans
they must be grey
 and cold
 for all our burning tears*



XXVI

dúnaimse mo shúile
chun tú a fheiscint
féach, taoi ann i gcónaí
 osclaím mo shúile
 tá tú i ngach áit faoin spéir

*i close my eyes
to see You
look, You are always there
 i open my eyes
 You are everywhere under the sun*



XXVII

greanadh as tost thú
is leáigh arís i dtost
cá bhfuilir anois
 i measc chama an ime
 is sailchuacha go brách

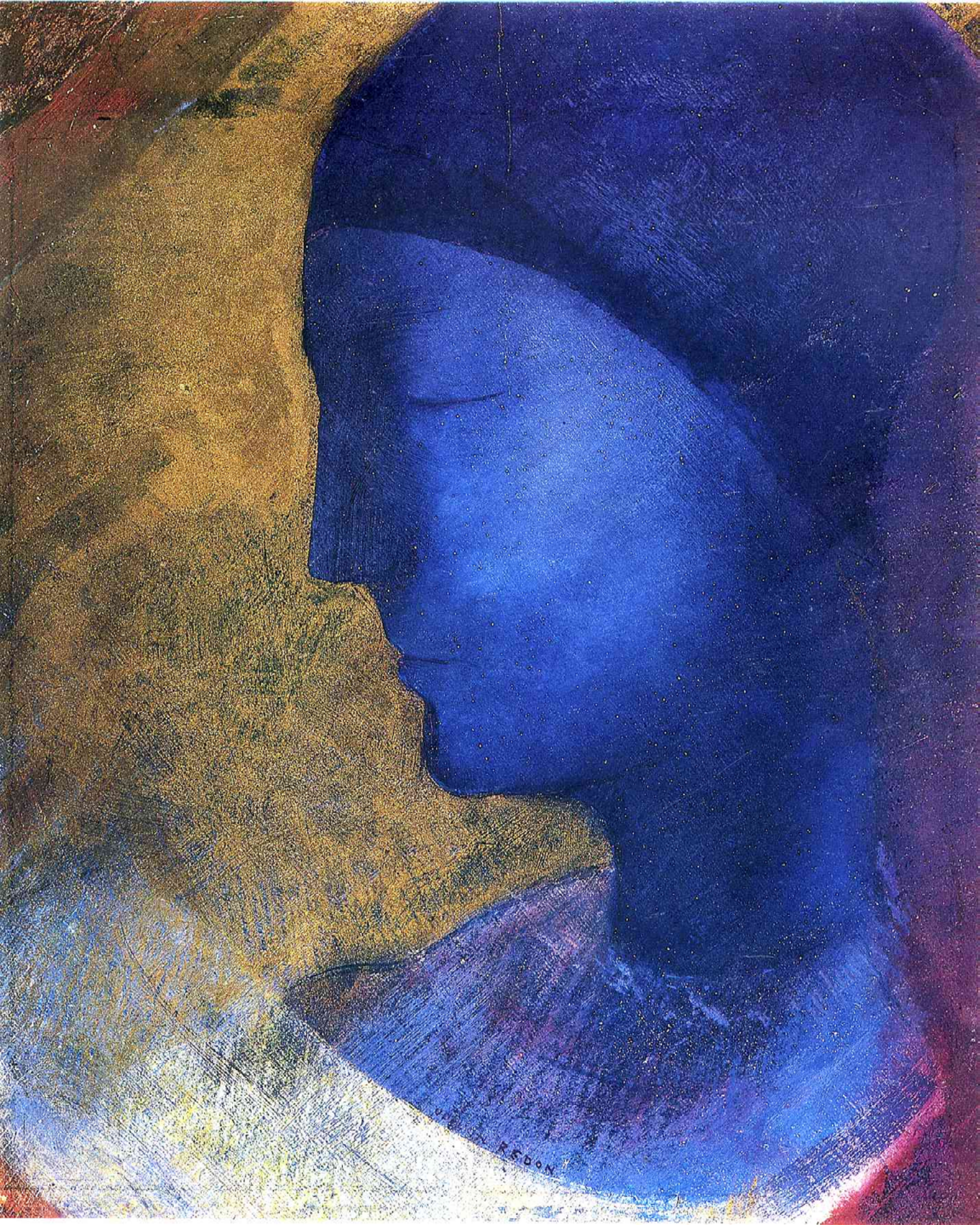
*from silence You were carved
and melted into silence
where are You now
 among buttercups
 and primroses forever*



XXVIII

tá do bheathaisnéis scríofa agam
gan bhriathra
gan phoncaíocht
ó thús go deireadh
solas íon sin uile

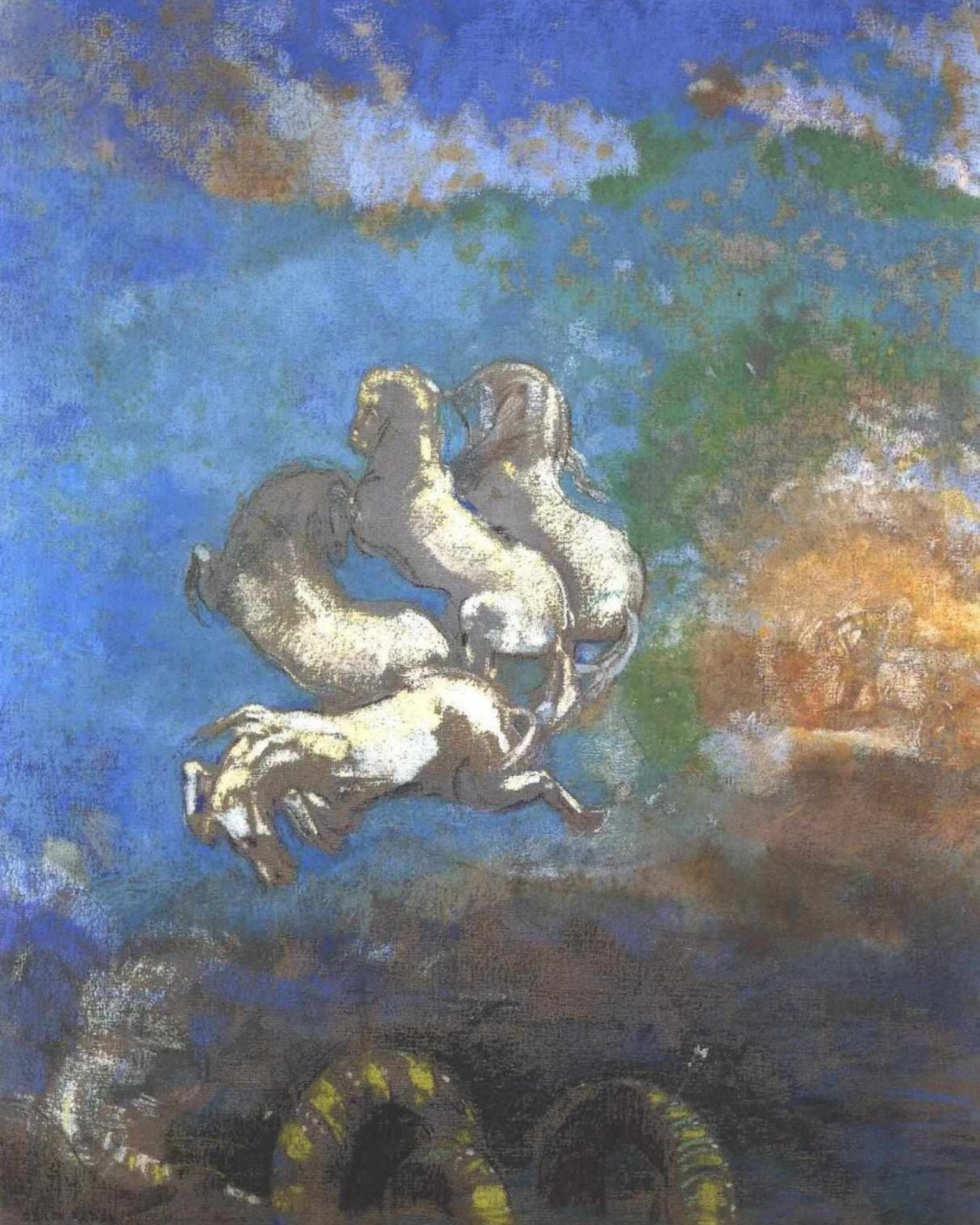
*i have written Your biography
without words
or punctuation
from start to finish
nothing but pure light*



XXIX

im' bhrionglóidí
seo chugam as réaltbhuíonta thú
crithloinnir ríméadach
 dá bhféadfainn frídín díot
 a phéinteáil anocht

*You visit me in dreams
emerging from constellations
shimmering in ecstasy
 if only i could paint
 a fraction of You tonight*



XXX

ná bíodh eagla ort roimh an gcamhaoir
ní faic é
níl ann ach sinn féin
Tusa ionamsa
mise lonatsa, a shearc

*fear not the dawn
for it is nothing
but ourselves
You in me
i in You, beloved*



XXXI

nuair a ghlaonn tú orm
tagaimse chugat
ní mar scáil
 ach mar dhuine
 atá saor ó gach scáil

*when You call to me
i come to You
not as a shadow
 but as someone
 free of all shadows*

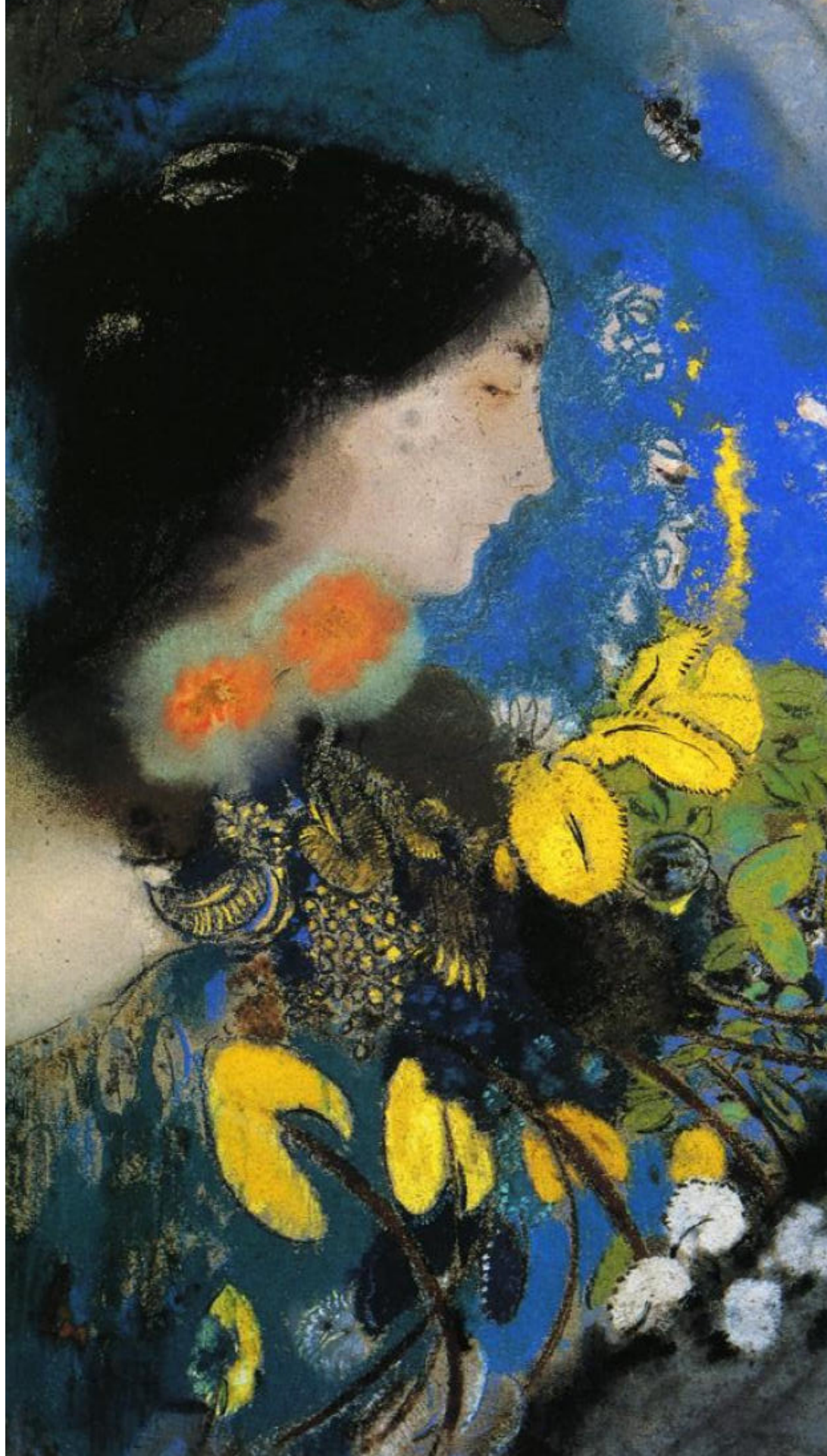


XXXII

bíodh sé seo agat mar samatha*
an tsúil ag imeacht
ó pheiteal go peiteal
go stadann fá dheoidh
i gcroílár an fhlóis

let this then be Your samatha
slowly the gaze revolves
from petal to petal
then comes to a stop
in the flower's core*

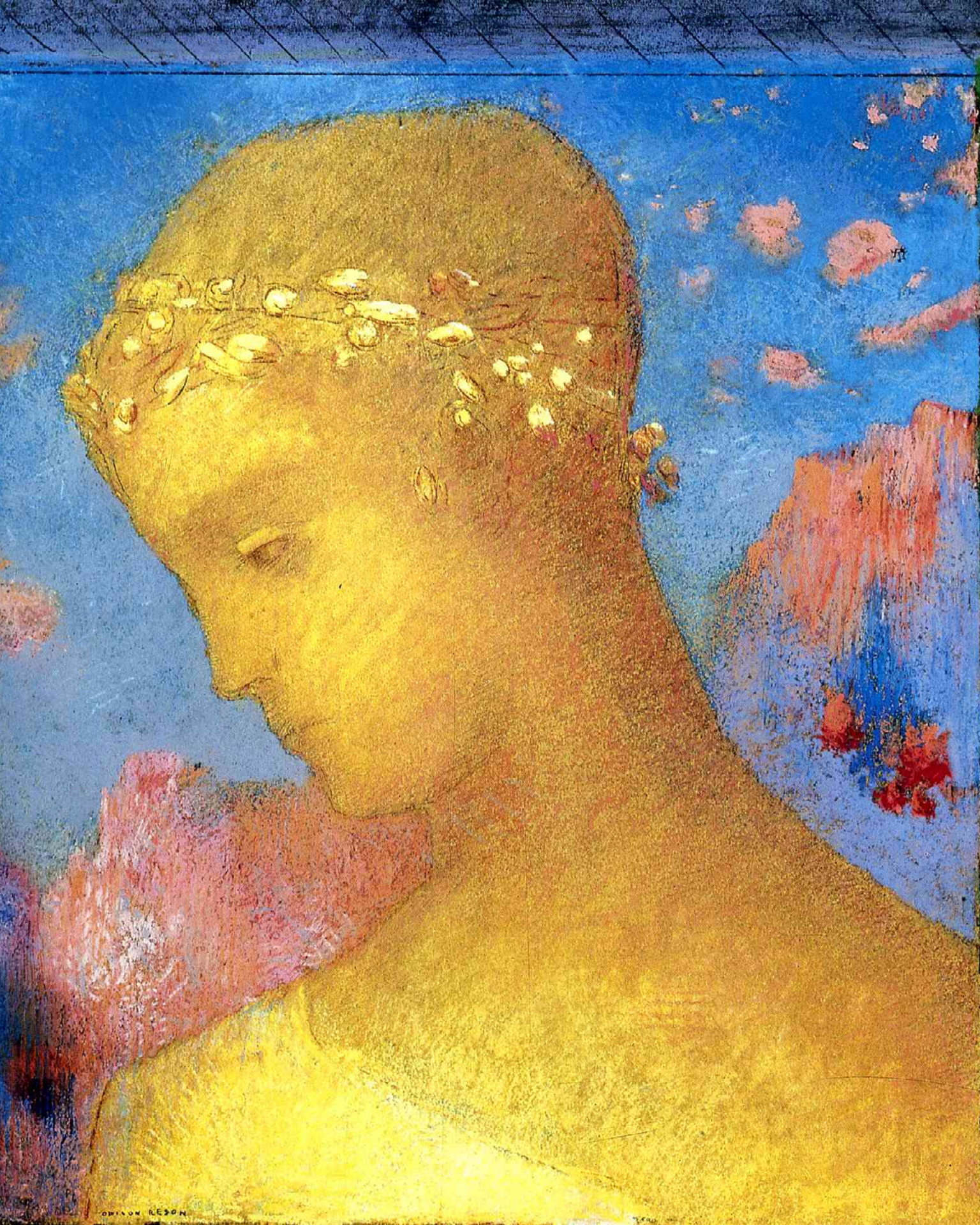
**meditative quiescence in order to gain abilities that are used
to assist others*



XXXIII

go mbronna an samatha seo agat
is tú faoi gheasa
ag imlínite duilleoige
 síocháin ort
 ríméad gan teorainn

*may Your samatha
Your absorption
in the contours of a leaf
 bring You peace
 and utter joy*



XXXIV

bíodh an uile ní ina samatha dhuit
an féileacán giongach fiú
glacann a scíth
go han-chiúin ann féin
filleann a sciatháin

*let all things be Your samatha
for the restless butterfly too
comes to rest
ever so quietly in itself
folding its wings*



XXXV

dá n-athródh draoi

nó asarlaí mé

im' bhrúid, a stór . . .

táimid gafa lastall de shubstaint

lastall d'fhoirm, lastall dínn féin

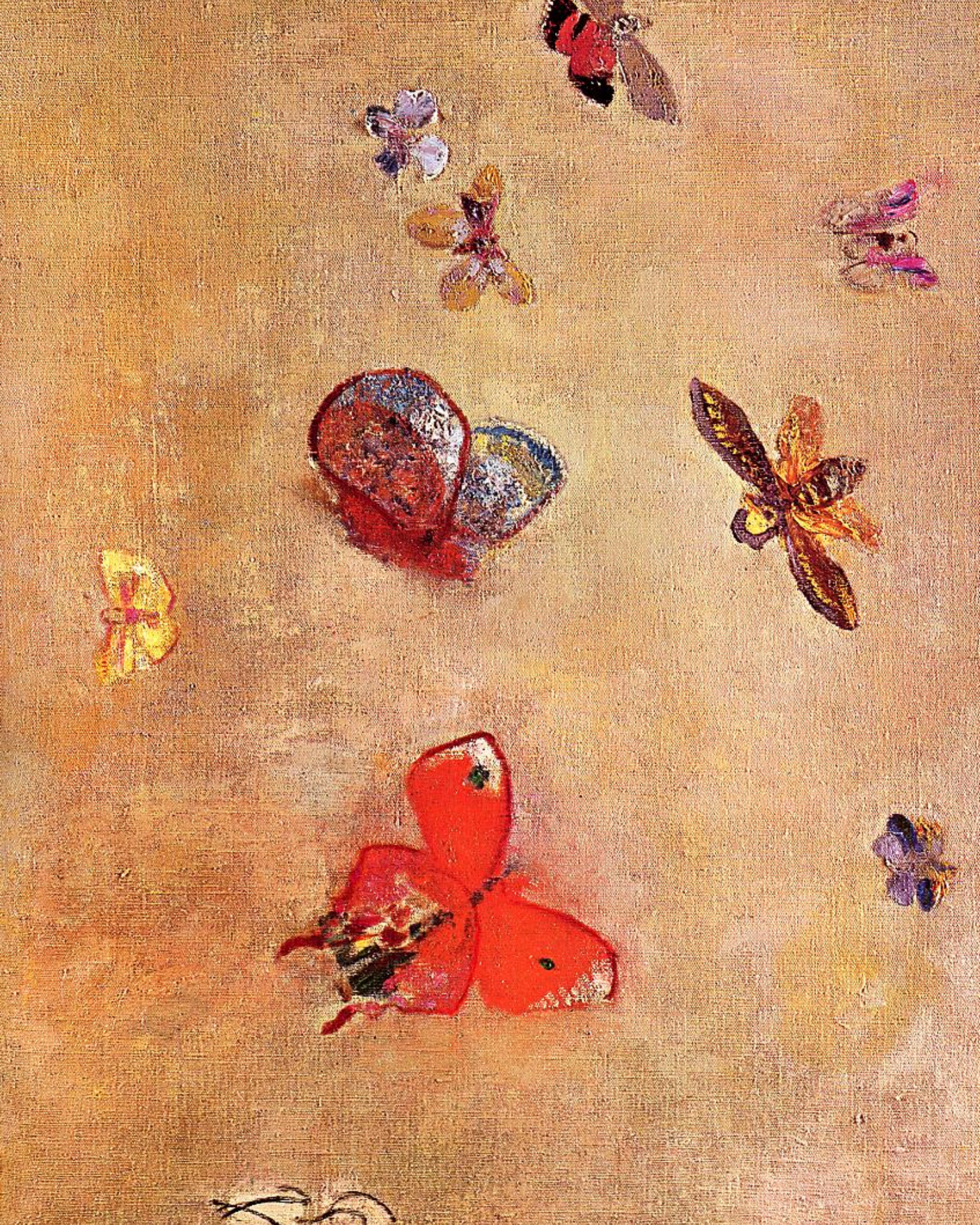
even if a druid

or wizard should change me

into something unspeakable, beloved . . .

we've gone beyond substance

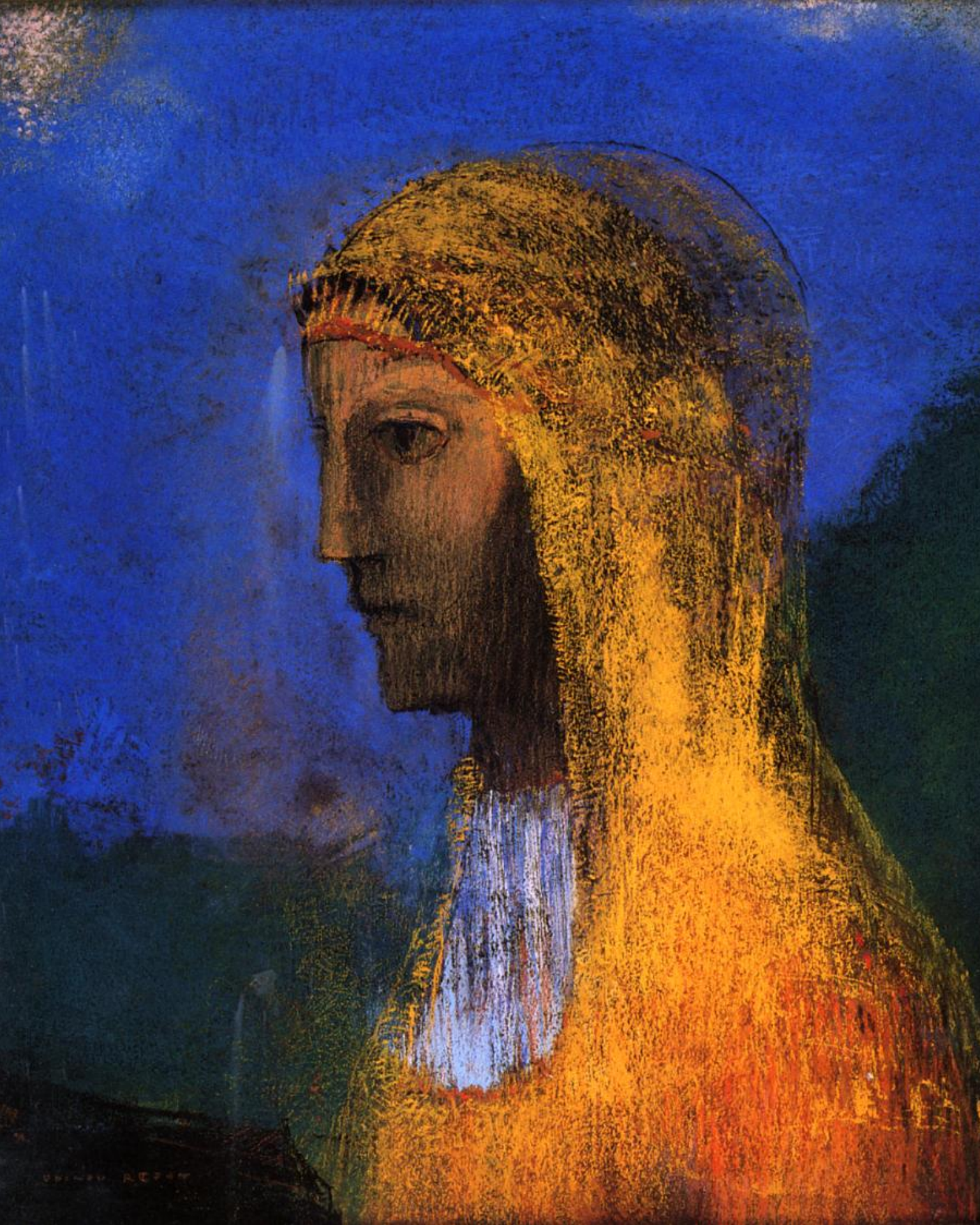
beyond form, beyond ourselves



XXXVI

i ngairdín
aigne Chuang-tzú
lorgaíomar a chéile
a shearc, an tAm i Láthair
ag eiteallaigh anois is choíche

*in the garden
of Chuang-tzu's mind
we looked for one another
beloved, the fluttering
of the Now as always*



XXXVII

lig dom breathnú
inár ndiaidh tríotsa
is amach romhainn
 is sa mhóimint seo
 is tusa ann, a shearc

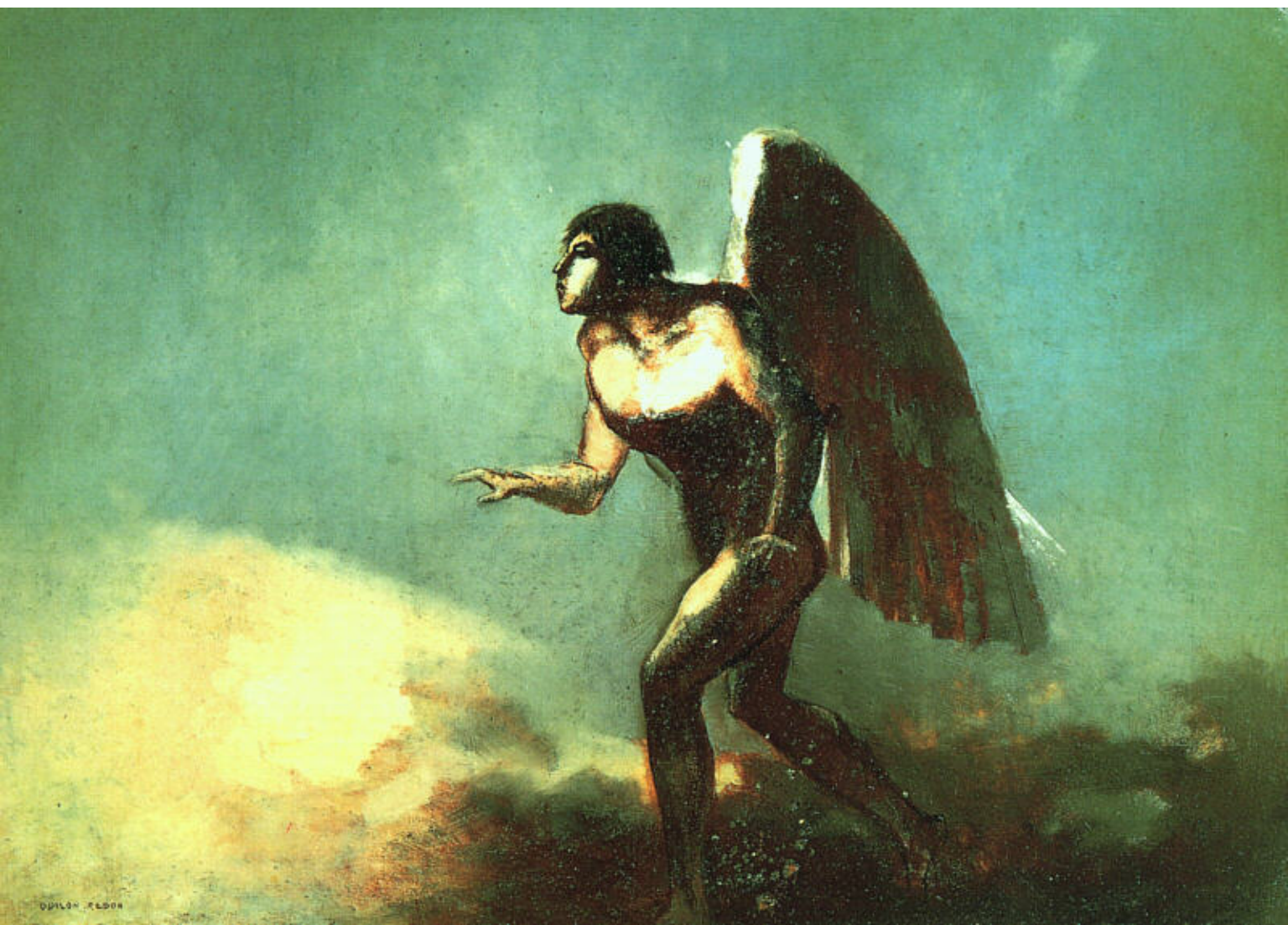
*let me look with You
into the past
into the future
 into this moment
 that is You, beloved*



XXXVIII

beannacht
na mbláth mbuan ort
de ló is d'óiche
do loinnirse
ina scáil orthu i gcónaí

*the blessing of perennial flowers
be upon You
night and day
Your radiance
always mirroring theirs*



XXXIX

tá an cuardach thart
dod' lorg a bhíos le fada
is tuigim anois
go rímhaith an scéal
bhíse sa tóir ormsa

*the search is over
all along i've looked for You
and now i know
and know for sure
You've been looking for me*



EDITH KERN

XL

tá d'ainm canta agam
ar mhíle sráid,
chugainn an trúbadóir, ar siad
is teitheann siad
dealg sa chroí gach amhrán grá

*I've sung Your name
in a thousand streets
the troubadour is here! they cry
and hide away
every song a thorn in the heart*



XLI

cén fhaid a thógann sé
ar sholas na gealaí
an domhan a bhaint amach
ar bhriathra, a chuid,
do chroíse a bhaint amach

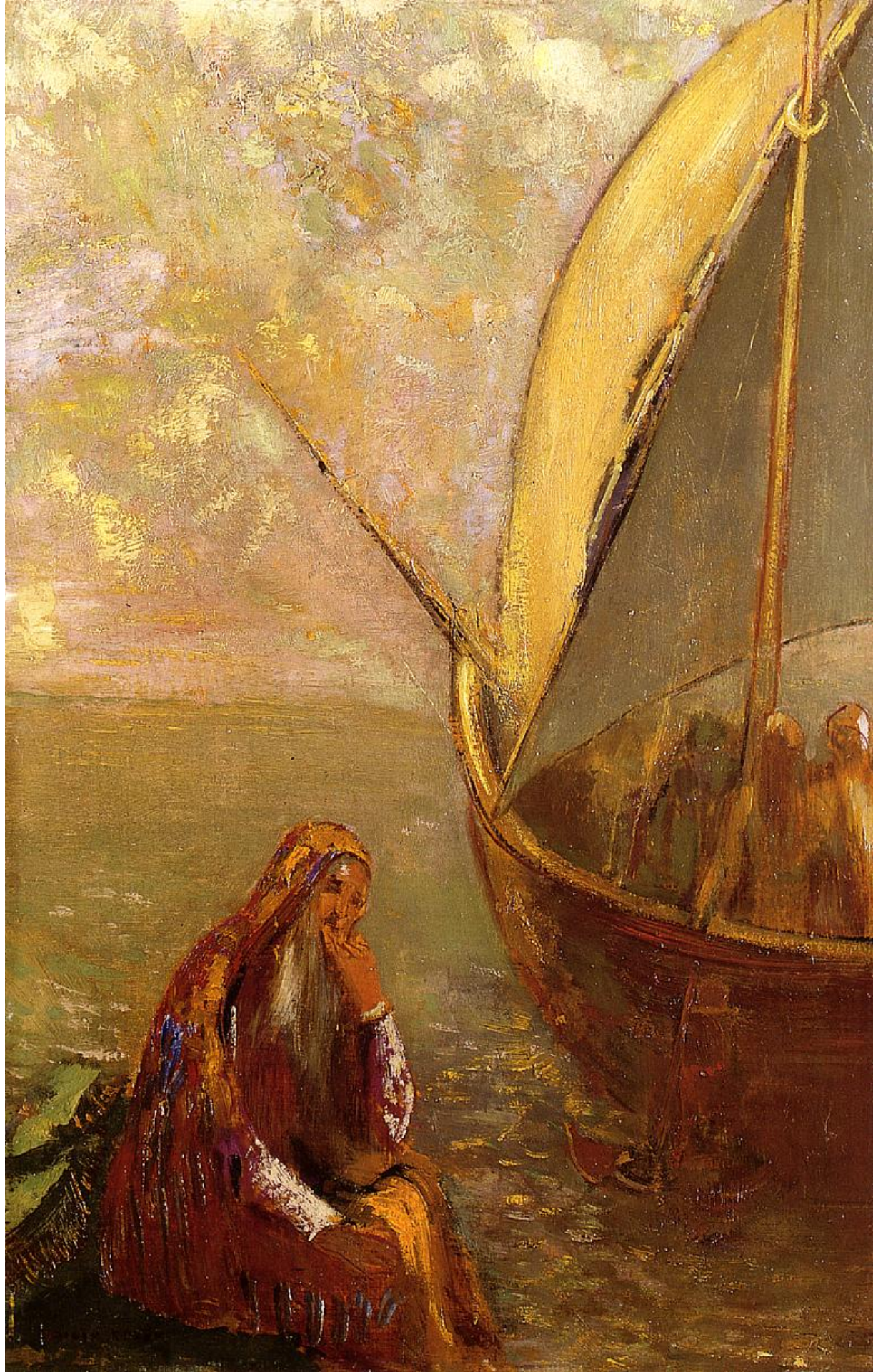
*how long does it take
for moonlight
to reach the earth
for words, beloved,
to reach Your heart*



XLII

tá mo chroí goidte ag mo rún geal
is curtha i bhfolach aici ar an sliabh
cá bhfuil mo chroí
 crónán na gaoithe
 éamh an philibín

*my love has stolen my heart
and hidden it on the moors
where is my heart
 soughing wind
 cry of peewit*



XLIII

tagadh – is imíodh – an t-am atá thart
an t-am atá le teacht
an t-am i láthair
 beadsa farat
 go Lá an Luain

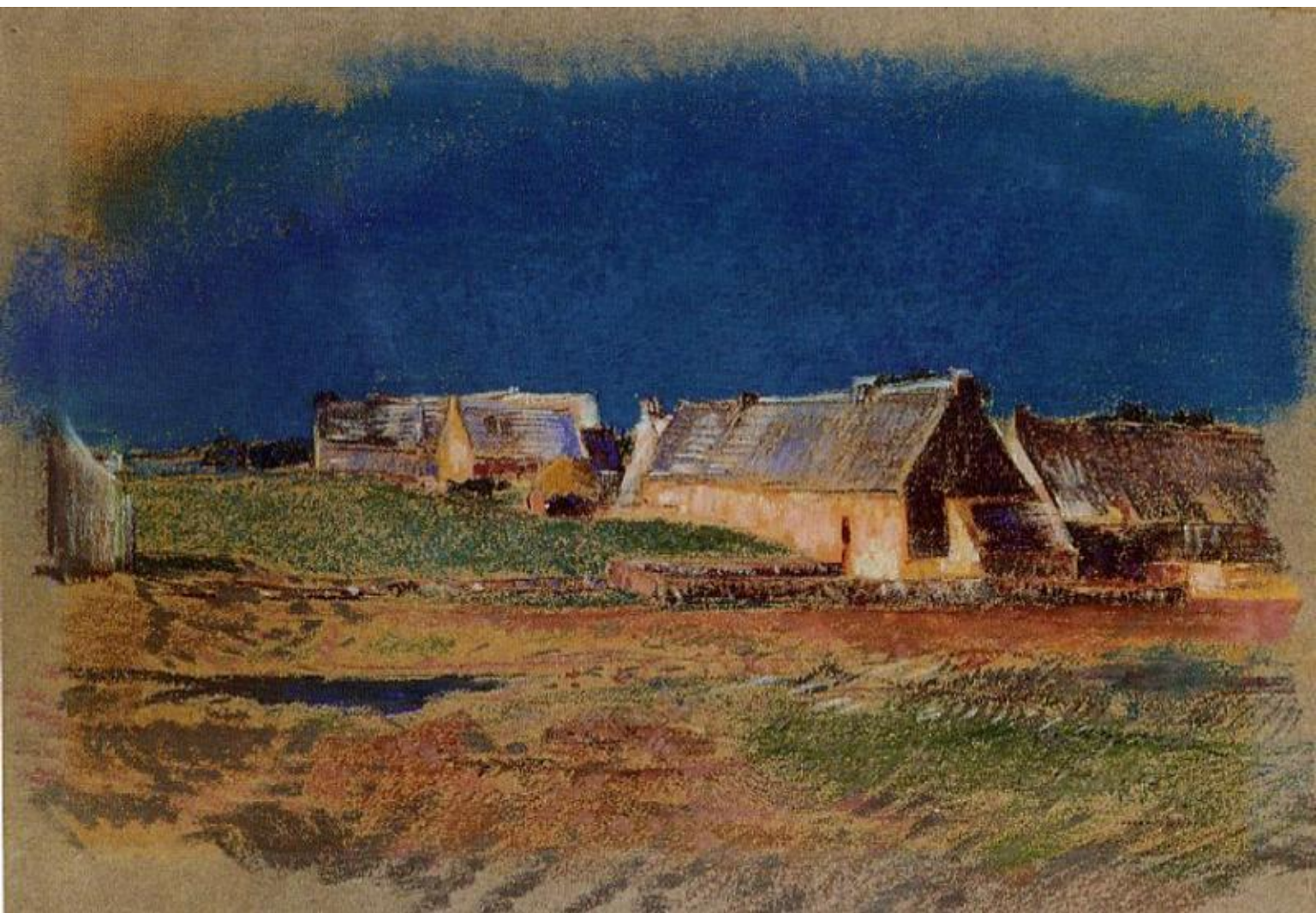
*let the past come – and go
the future come – and go
the present come – and go
 i am with You
 until the crack of doom*



XLIV

a shearc
roinnim leis an gcrann
mo ríméad
 nochtann bláthanna
 i bhfaiteadh na súl

*beloved
to the tree
I whisper my joy
 one by one
 blossoms appear*



XLV

cén fhaid sa tóir ar a chéile sinn
i ngach aeráid
cnagann beach fhómhair
 in aghaidh na fuinneoige
 bhfuil an geimhreadh chugainn

*how long have we searched for one another
in how many climes
an autumn bee thumps
 against the window
 is winter near*

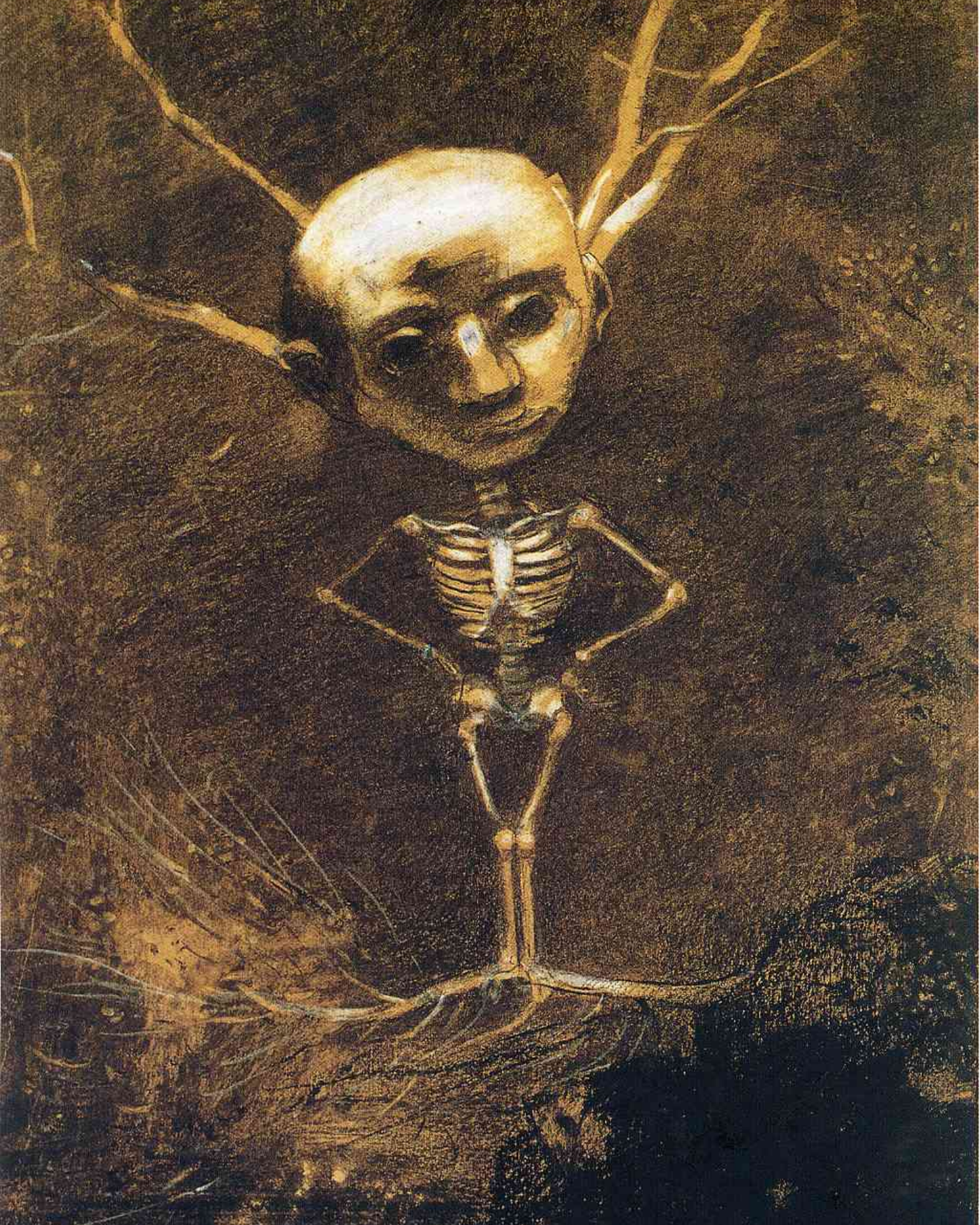


Ad. n.

XLVI

tógfad uisceadán duit
roghnóimid na héisc sin
atá ag teacht led' bhrionglóidí
féach orthu fad agus is mian leat
éisc nach gcodlóidh choíche

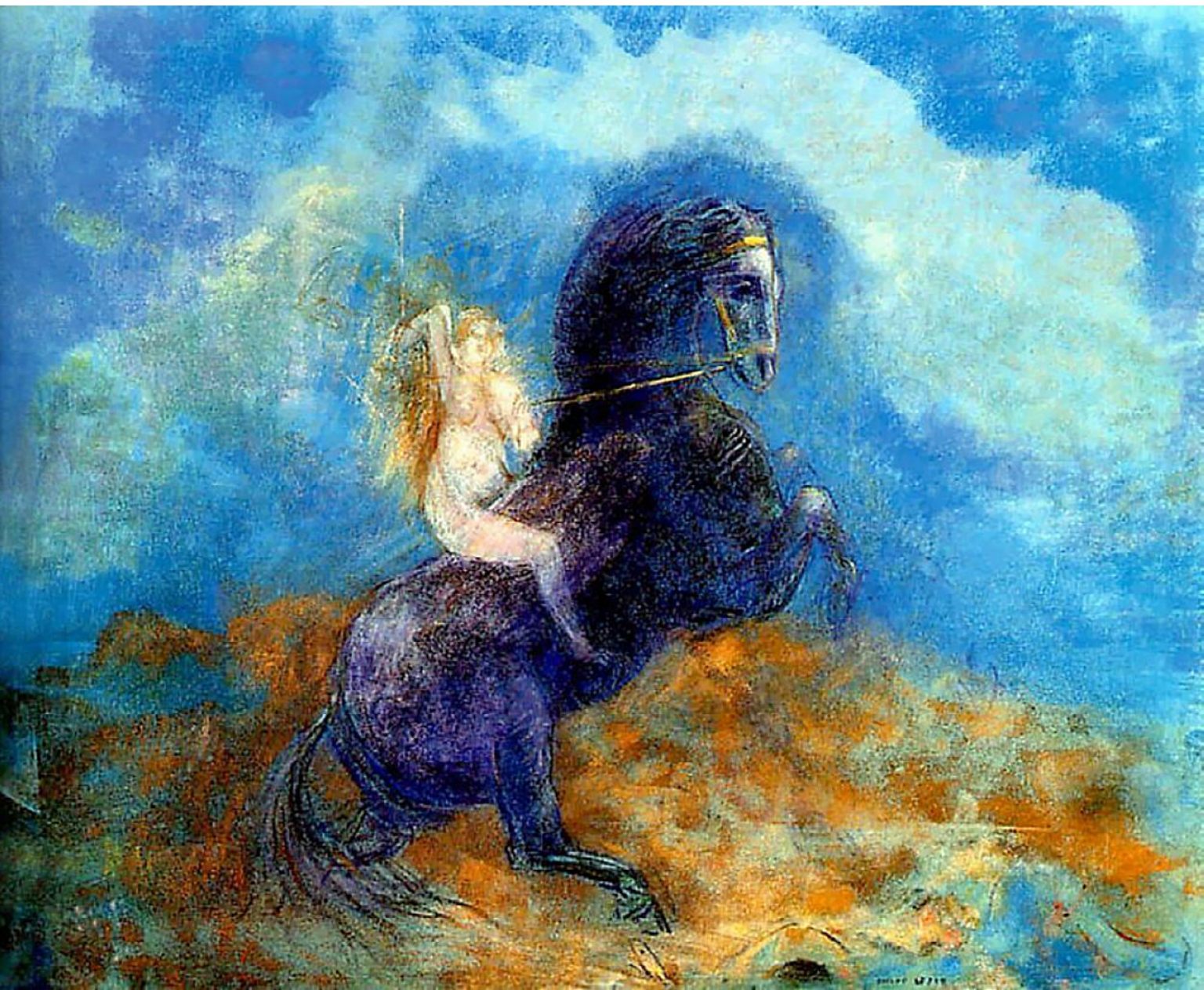
*let's build an aquarium
together we'll choose fish
best suited to Your dreams
look as long as You like
fish that never sleep*



XLVII

bíodh sé ann
nó ná bíodh
pé rud a bhí ann
 ná bacaimis le nithe
 is léir nó nach léir don aigne

*it may have been there
it may not have been
whatever it was
 why bother with things
 of the mind seen and unseen*



XLVIII

ceangail do chuid gruaige, a shearc
ceangail mise chomh maith
ceangail chomh foirfe sin mé
nach sleamhnóinn go deo
as an néal seo

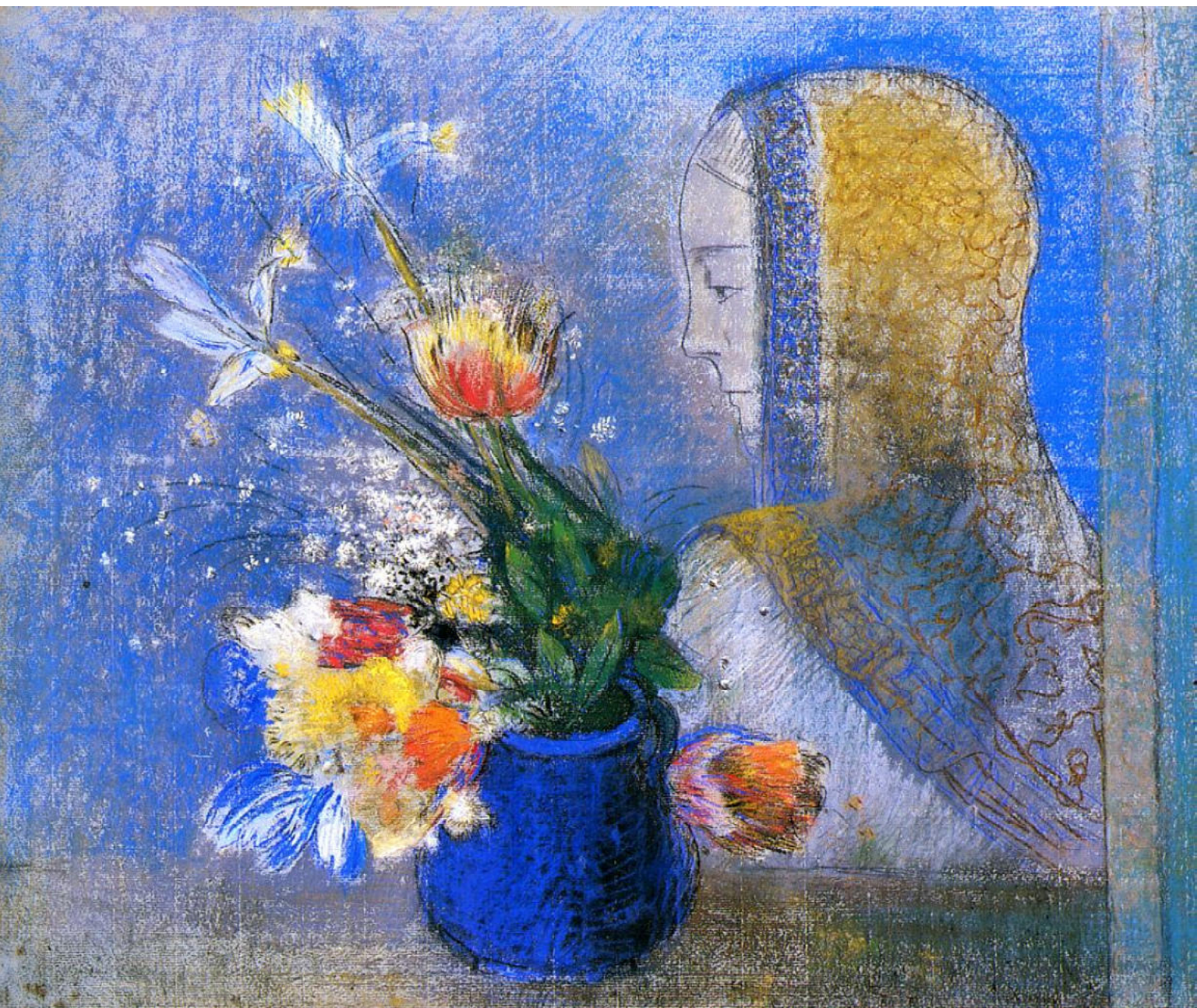
*bind Your hair, beloved
bind me while You are at it
bind me perfectly
that i may never escape
this glorious dream*



XLIX

blátha a chuirim chugat
oíche i ndiaidh oíche
gealann siad an saol
 fiafraíonn an chruinne di féin
 cathain a bhí dorchadas ann

*flowers i send You
night after night
to illuminate the world
 the universe wonders
 when last have we seen the dark*



L

machnaigh ar na blátha
a chuirim chugat gach oíche
níl agam ach iad
 mise atá iontu
 cumhracht d'anamsa

*meditate on the flowers
i send You nightly
they are all that i have
 all that i am
 Your soul's fragrance*



LI

roinneann mo chumann í féin
is scata í is aon
tá róba uirthi
 tá sí nocht
 grian oíche

*my love divides herself
she is many she is one
she is robed
 she is naked
 the night sun*



LII

folc tú féin i luan na bhflós
is ann atá d'óige
is do bhanúlacht
 blátha fite as laoithe cumainn
 na dtrúbadóirí nár rugadh fós

*bathe in the aura of flowers
it is where Your girlhood lies
and Your womanhood
 flowers woven from the love songs
 of troubadours yet to be born*



LIII

cá'il ár n-áit dhúchais
dá bhféadfaimis maireachtaint
 'feadh aon lá amháin
 i ngairdíní tréigthe
 an domhain dhearóil seo

*where do we belong
if only we could live
for one fine day
 in abandoned gardens
 of our lost world*



LIV

murach an tost seo
ní bheadh teacht ort
na bláthanna a chuirtear chugat gach oíche
neadaíonn id' thostsa
go domhain is go brách

*without silence
You could not be reached
the flowers i send You nightly
nestle forever in the depths
of Your silence*



LV

say farewell to land
to all that ties us
farewell to the sea
soon our boat will take us
beyond the horizon

*abair slán le talamh
le gach cuing
slán leis an muir
is gearr go dtabharfaidh ár mbád sinn
thar fhíor na spéire*



LVI

do phógsa
tost
an Bhúda
do bharrógsa
tost Chríost

*Your kiss
the silence
of the Buddha
Your embrace
the silence of Christ*



LVII

ní mhaithfidh siad dúinn é
naimhde an gháire
naimhde na saoirse
 cráfaidh ár ngrá iad
 go deo na ndeoir

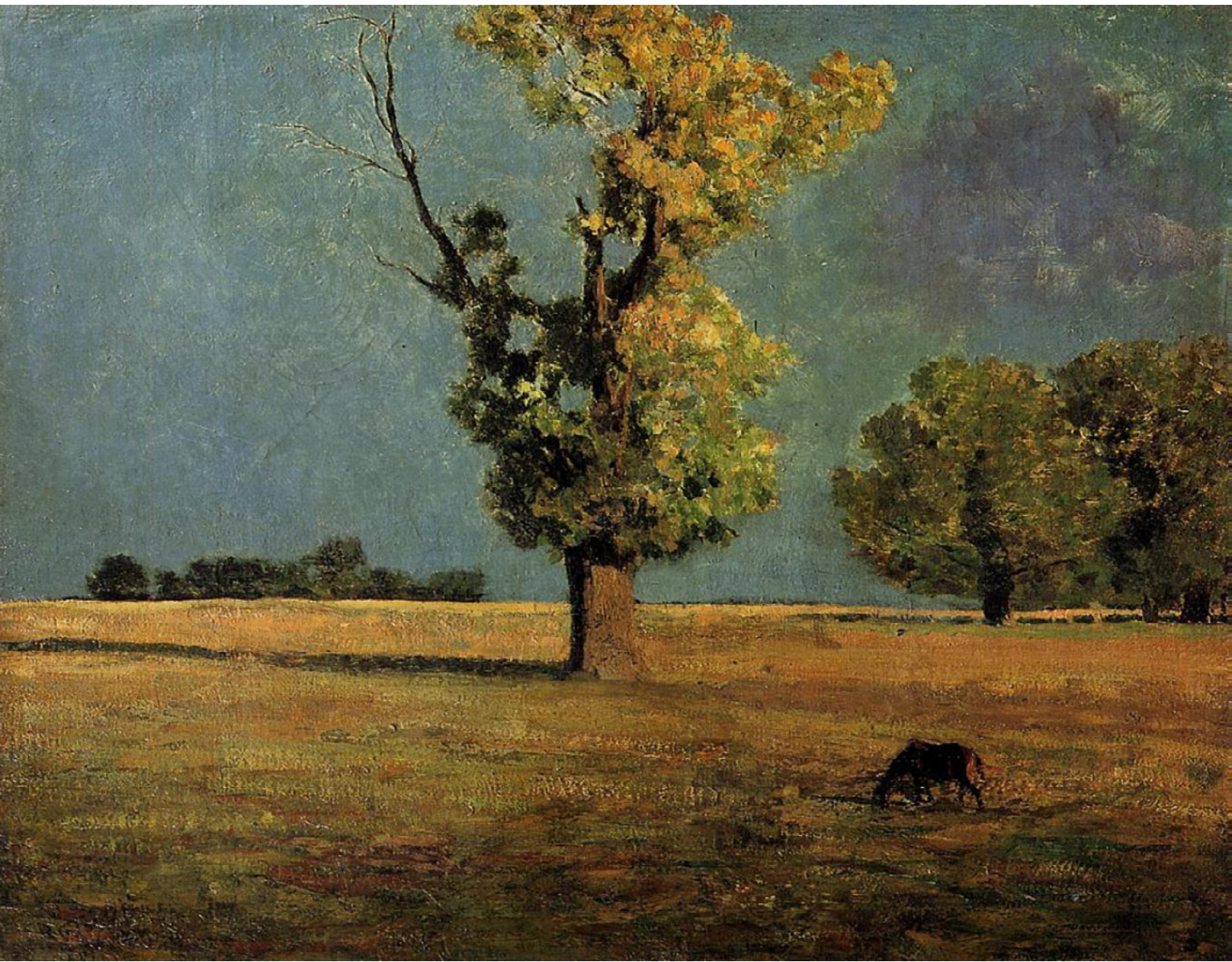
*enemies of laughter
enemies of freedom
will never forgive us
 our love will torment them
 for all eternity*



LVIII

an bhfuilirse gach áit
féachaim thall féachaim abhus
tá tú gach aon áit
a shearc, téir i bhfolach
lig dom dul sa tóir arís ort

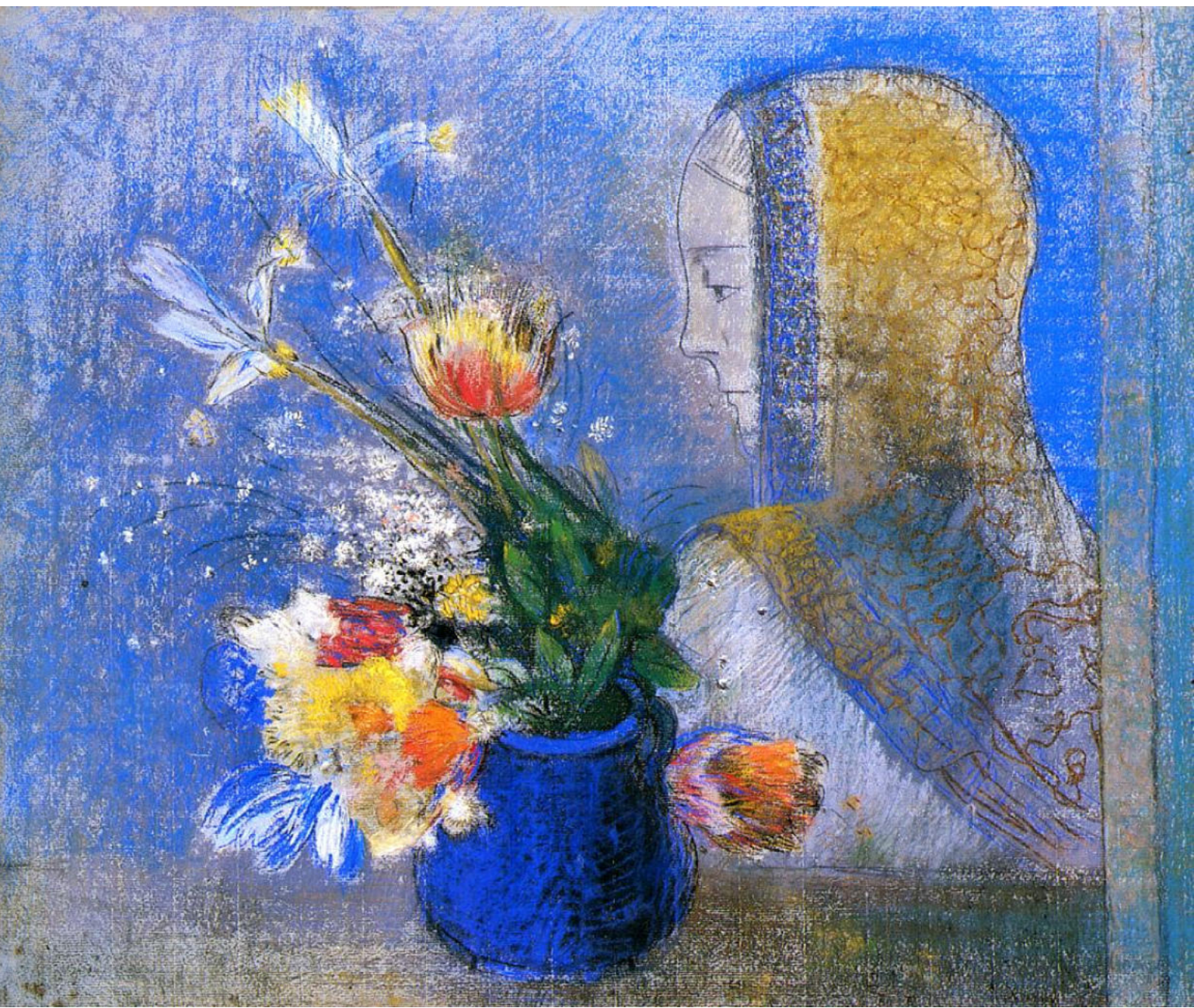
*are You everywhere
this way and that way i peer
You are everywhere
beloved, hide from me now
let me seek You out once more*



LIX

braithim uaim thú
an crann a bhraitheann uaidh
duilliúr atá in easnamh
 brúid sa ghort
 ag tnúth le heolas

*this longing for You
longing of a tree
for lost foliage
 beast in the field
 longing for knowledge*



LX

dá n-iompófá id' ghiorria
(tarlaíonn a leithéid)
bheinnse im' chú
 sheilgfinn thú
 fad le Loch na dTrí gCaol

*if You turned into a hare
(such things happen)
I would be a hound
 pursuing You all the way
 to the Lake of Three Narrows*



LXI

a chogarnach, na briathra seo cad iad
níl insint béil ar an bhfírinne
ná ar an ngrá
 loiscthe atáim go deo agat
 i dtost gan teorainn

*beloved, these words what are they
truth is wordless
love is wordless
 in silence i burn forever
 and ever in Your flame*



LXII

líonta le solas Chríost
is é aiséirithe
chuir manaigh chun farraige
a shearc, níl de mhisean agamsa
ach go mbáfaí ionat mé

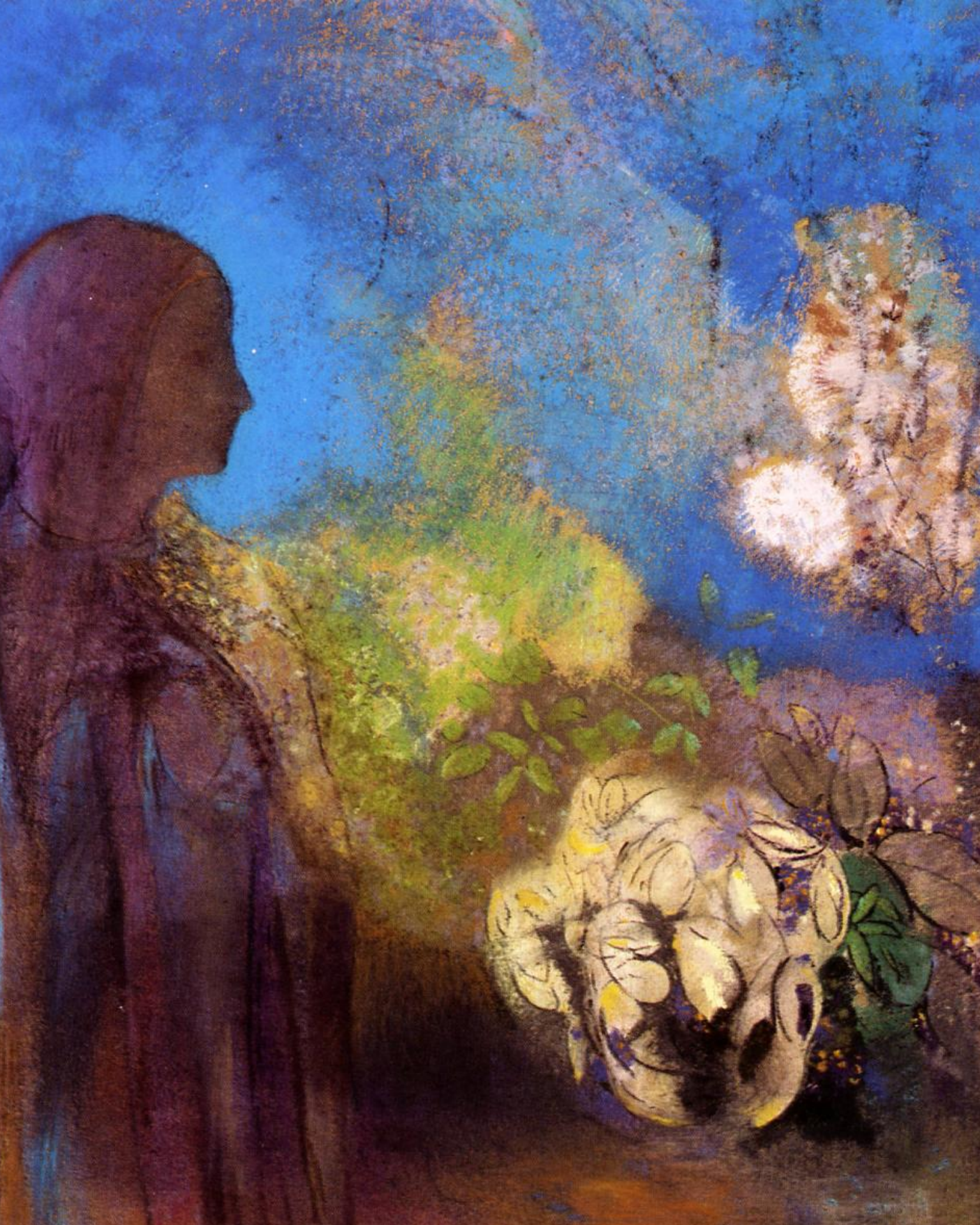
*filled with the light
of the risen Christ
monks went to sea
beloved, i have no mission
but to drown in You*



LXIII

gabh mé, a shearc
ceansaigh mé rithimse leis an ngaoith
tar led' shealán
is le briathra suaimhneacha
rófhada mé san uaigneas

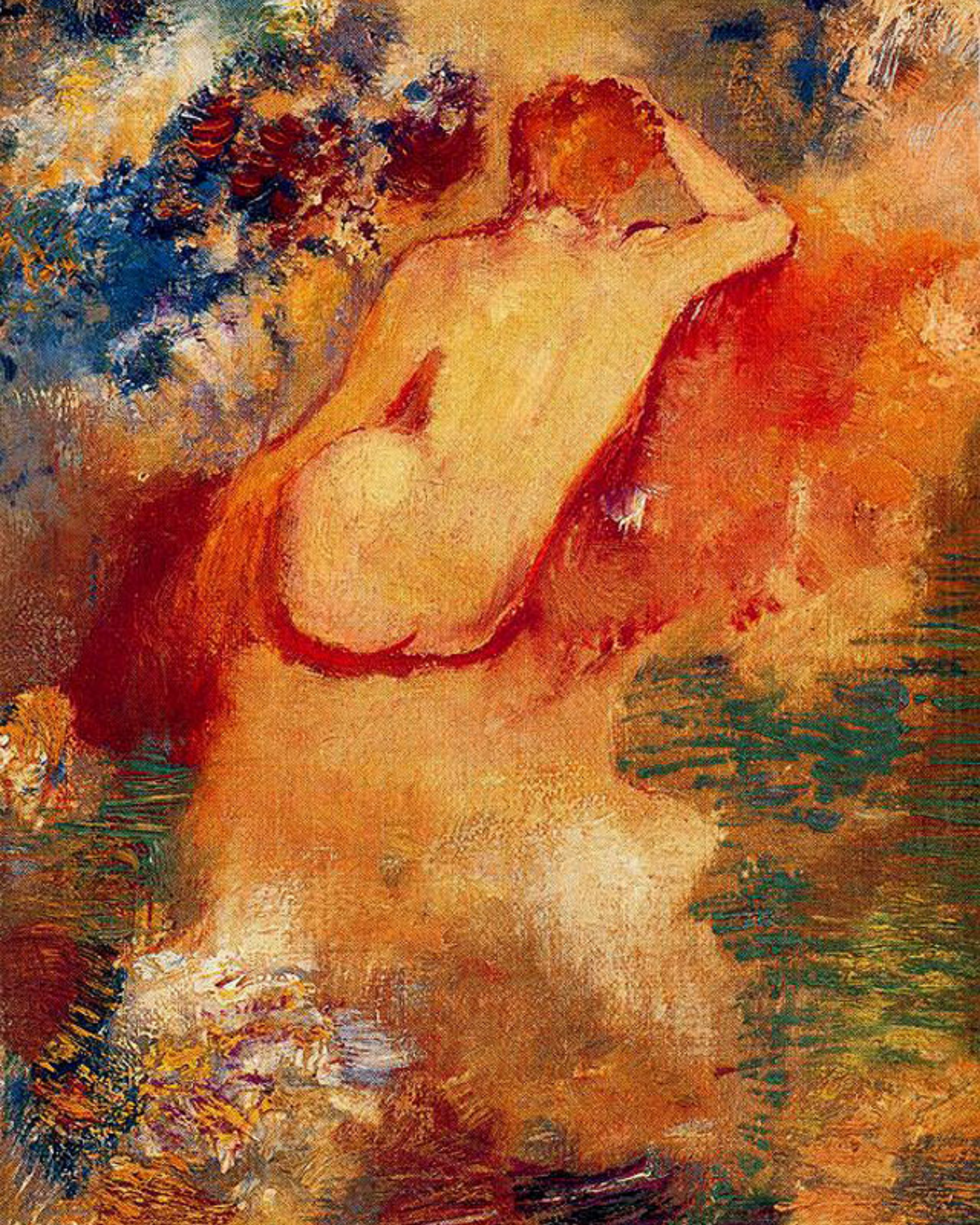
*capture me, beloved
tame me i run with the wind
come with Your noose
and with calming words
i've been too long in the wild*



LXIV

fiáin atá siad
na blátha a thagann amach
gach oíche
 chomh fiáin le croí an ainrialaí sin
 a phioc ina gceann is ina gceann iad

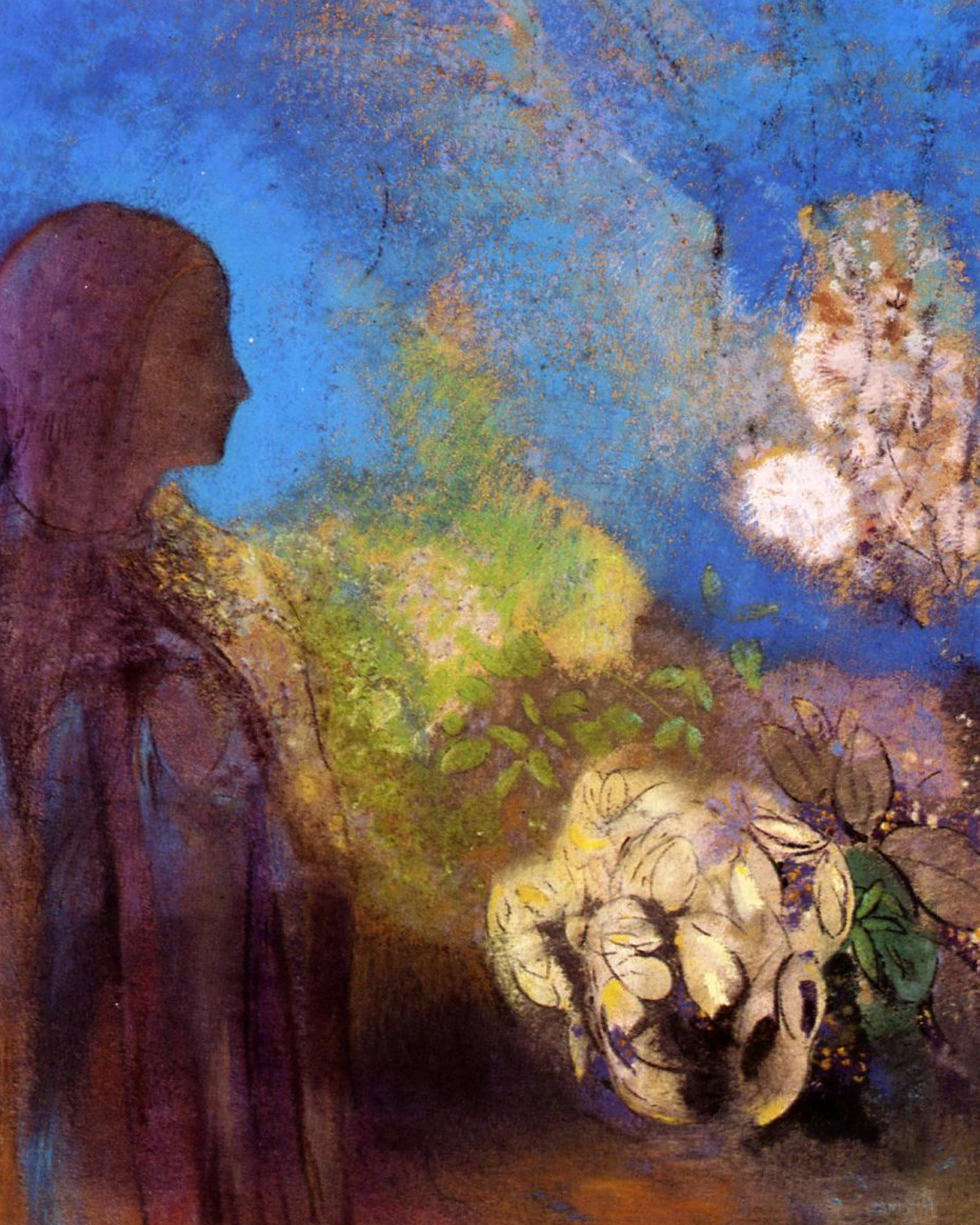
*they are wild
the flowers that bloom for You
in the night
 wild as the anarchist's heart
 that plucked each flower for You*



LXV

bhíos ag feitheamh leat
is an t-am á leá
an raibh ina lá nó ina oíche
 cailleadh ár dteanga siolla ar shiolla
 teanga na mbláth a labhras leat

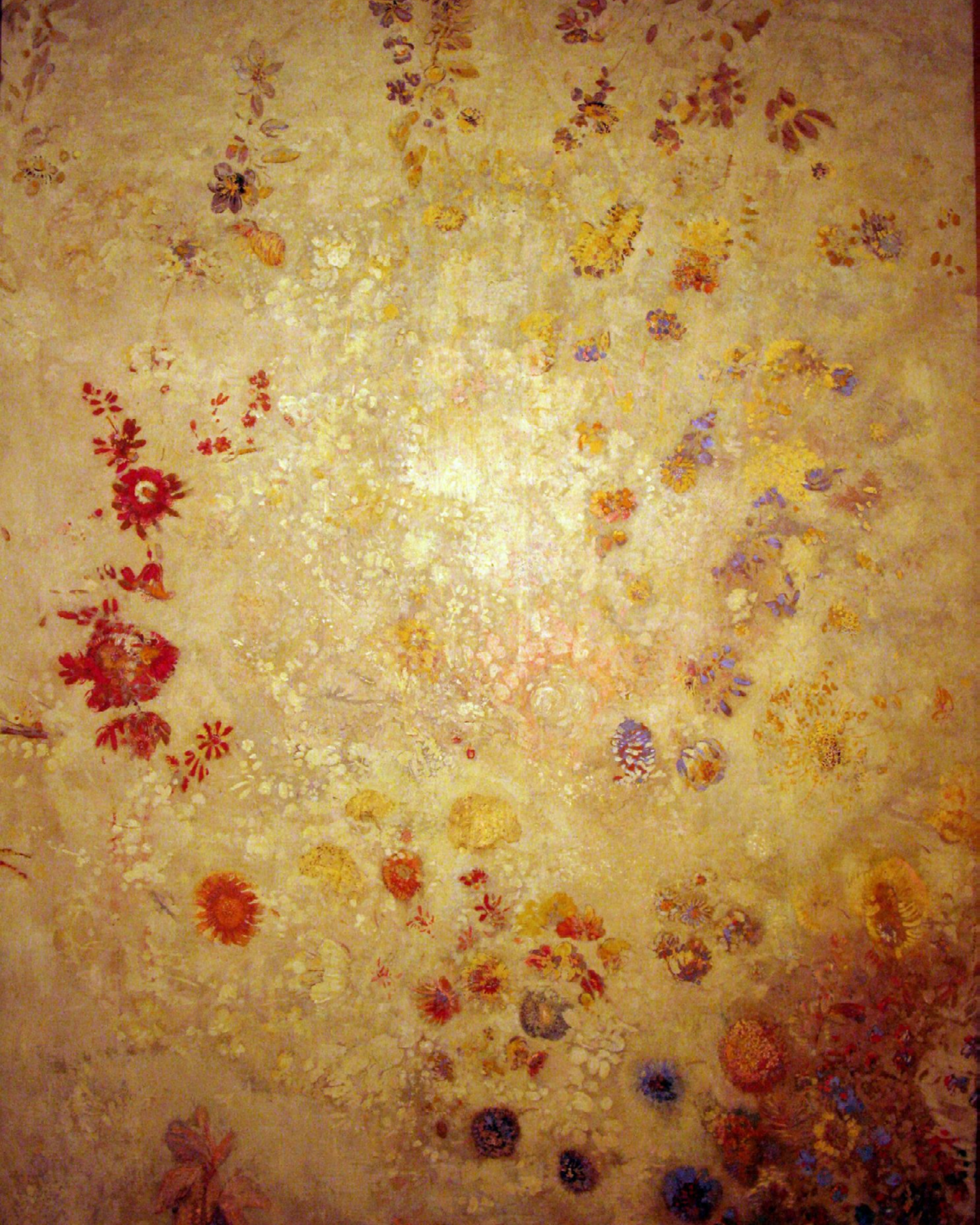
*i have waited for You
through melting time
not knowing night from day
 language died syllable by syllable
 i spoke in the tongue of flowers*



LXVI

nach léir duit mé
i bhfáinne geal an lae
i ngile na heala
nach léir duit mise
leáite ionatsa

*do You not see me
in the whiteness of dawn
brightness of a swan
do You not see me
as i dissolve in You*



LXVII

cad a imíonn ar an amhrán
a fhaigheann bás
an t-amhrán nár canadh riamh
amhráin mar iad a roghnaíos
le canadh duitse inniu

*what happens to a song
when it dies
what happens to the unborn song
such songs I've chosen
to sing for You today*



LXVIII

tá éilicsir
i ngach bláth
a ruaigfeadh an t-éadóchas
níl uathu ach deora áthais
a ansacht, le bheith beo

*in each flower
is an elixir
that banishes despair
weep for joy, beloved
to keep each flower alive*



LXIX

a Mhaighdean na Camhaoire
na síor-chamhaoire
póg ar chlár éadain mé
 oscail rosc
 na cruinne ionam

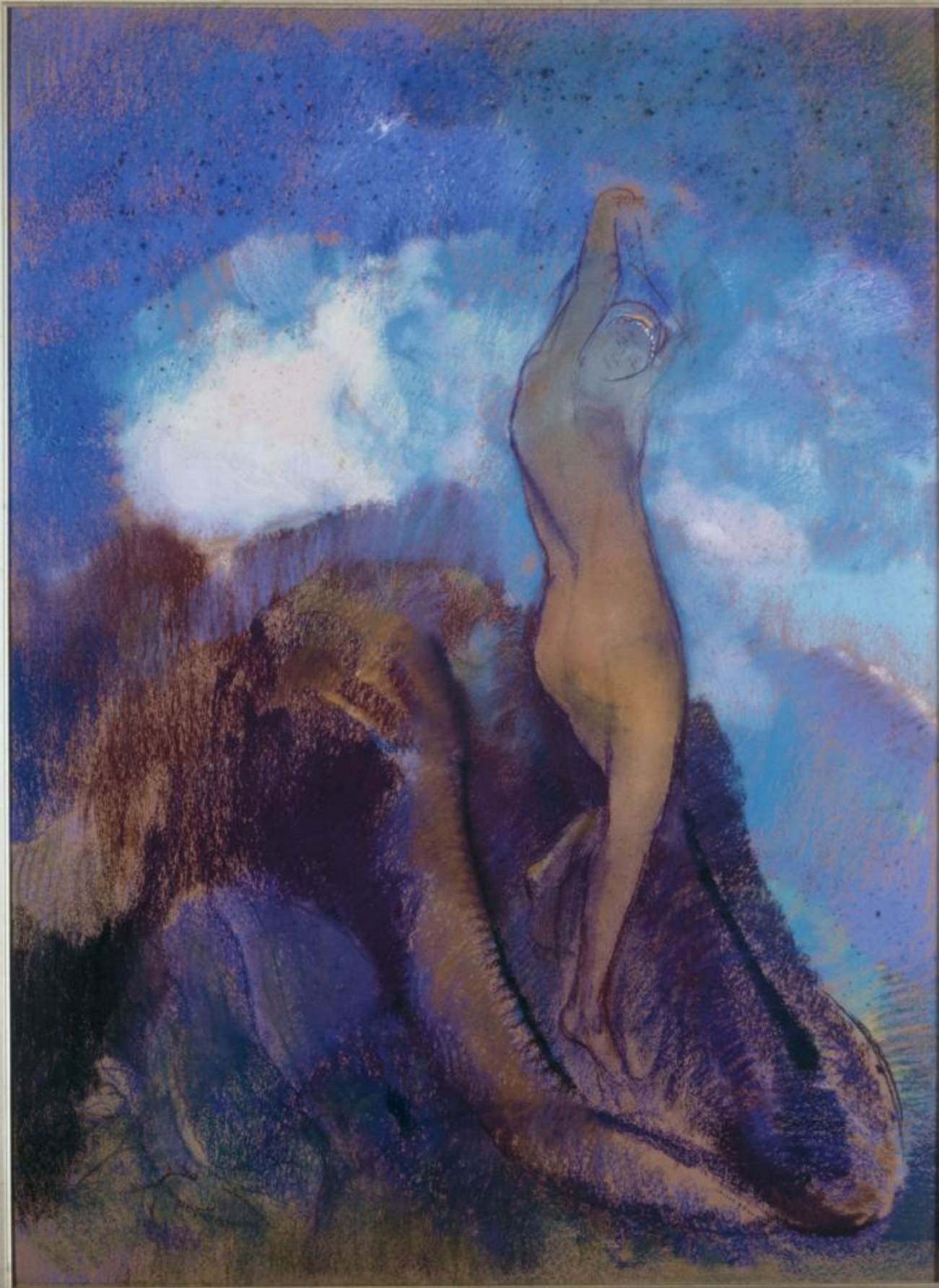
*Virgin of the Dawn
ever-dawning
kiss me on the forehead
 open up inside me
 the eye of the universe*



LXX

tá sé go léir breactha síos
i leabhar na leathanach bán
an rabhadar ann
na dánta na bláthanna
agatsa amháin atá an freagra

*it's all written down
in a book of blank pages
are they real
the poems the flowers
only You can say*



LXXI

a thaisce, treoraíonn tú mé
níl fhios agam cén áit
lasmuigh díom féin chugatsa
treascartha ag cumhracht na hoíche
cumhracht ghorm na maidine

*beloved You lead me
i know not where
beyond myself to You
overpowered by the scent of night
blue scents of morning*



LXXII

féileacáin sa tóir
ar na bláthanna a chuirim chugat
táid glan as a meabhair
teannaigí bhur sciatháin
guígí ar a son i dtámhnéal cumhra

*pursued by butterflies
all the flowers i send You
they are as maddened as i
fold your wings and pray for her
in a fragrant swoon*



LXXIII

an raibh earrach
mar seo riamh ann, a stór
síneann bláthanna amach chugat
ag gabháil buíochais leat
as an mbeatha go léir inniu

*was there ever a spring
like this before
beloved, blossoms reach out
as though to thank You
for the life this day contains*



LXXIV

ní raibh agam riamh
le tabhairt duit
ach an bláth a phéacann
im' chroíse, a thaisce, bláth
gan ainm ar thaobh an bhóthair

*i never had anything
to bring You
but the flower that blooms
in my heart, beloved
nameless flower of the wayside*



LXXXV

is gearr uaim deireadh an róid
cad eile atá le canadh
tú a adhradh anois go ciúin
éisteoidh tú i dtost
lem' laoithe balbha

*my wanderings may soon end
what is there left to sing
in silence i shall adore You
in silence You shall listen
to wordless songs of mine*



LXXVI

duitse lorgaíos
an ní nach raibh teacht air
d'aimsíos friotal don ní doráite
 anois gan aon chuid díom fágtha
 éist le siollaí deireanacha m'amhráinse

*for You i sought
what could not be found
said what could not be said
 now, emptied of all,
 hear the last strains of my song*



LXXVII

a shearc, is sine é do thost
ná an t-am féin
agus leánn im' thostsa
feicimid is ár súile dúnta
fobhair ár gcuid mianta

*Your silence, beloved
is older than time itself
it blends with mine
with closed eyes we can see
the wellsprings of our desire*

Odilon Redon

Odilon Redon (April 20, 1840 – July 6, 1916) was a French painter. Many of his works were inspired by phrases from books, resulting in what he called ‘correspondences’. It’s a nice historical twist that his extraordinary visuals, in turn, have now inspired words. The words in this book are in freestyle tanka form, a Japanese poetic genre which is the oldest type of verse still in use today after some 1300 years.

One of the greatest of all tankaists was Saigyō (1118 – 1190) and here we have versions in Irish and English of a tanka by Saigyō, reproducing the classic configuration of 5-7-5-7-7 syllabets:

as at them i gaze
I’ve grown very close indeed
to these blossoms all
parting with them when they fall –
such a bitter day ‘twill be

nuair a fheicim iad
braithim an-chóngarach
do na blátha seo
 titfidh siad go léir ar ball
 och monuar nach trua an scéal

Redon, in his art, was hugely influenced by Japanese aesthetics. He was only a young boy when France resumed trade with Japan, a country closed to the West since 1600 and Japonisme – the craze for Japanese art and design – was the artistic cult of his age. ‘Cult’ is a word that could also describe the attitude of his Parnassian contemporaries who saw art as something worthy of religious devotion, a notion almost alien to the aesthetics of the 21st century, at least in the West.

He was born in Bordeaux and preferred the nickname Odilon (after his mother Odile) to his given name, Bertrand-Jean Redon. As a youth, he enjoyed watching clouds and listening to folktales. He was already drawing

by the age of ten.

Redon briefly joined the army. The Franco-Prussian War affected him deeply. Like his father before him, he married a Creole woman. Her name was Camille Falte. It was a happy marriage but Redon's artistic career was slow to make a mark. At the age of 58 he wrote to his mother: "I have nothing. There are only a few francs in my pocket."

The world came to hear about him in a strange way. In 1884 a novel appeared by Joris-Karl Huysmans featuring an aristocrat who collects the paintings of Redon. In the words of Huysmans:

"These drawings defied classification; unheeding, for the most part, of the limitations of painting, they ushered in a very special type of the fantastic, one born of sickness and delirium . . ."

It was a fine Irish writer, by the way, George Moore, who first recognised the literary talents of Huysmans.

Redon worked mostly with charcoal at first – works which he described as ‘noirs’ – and it is not until after 1900 that we see all those vivid flowers of his in oil and pastel.

Through his interest in Theosophy, Redon’s understanding of the ‘aura’ deepened – the glow of thought waves. A botanist friend, Armand Clavaud, recommended such Indian classics as Valmiki’s Ramayana. He enjoyed reading great poetry from India as well as the work of his fellow French writers Baudelaire and Flaubert. A critic, Marius Leblond, said of him, ‘he made French idealism spring back and radiate in painting.’

Redon was also fascinated by Celtic culture, druids – and druidesses! – and the Celtic view of the natural world. Brittany felt to him like an ‘ancient homeland’ where he had once lived and loved.

His illustrations of Poe are remarkable. This raven looks like it could talk.



Odilon Redon in his own words:

My drawings inspire, and are not to be defined. They place us, as does music, in the ambiguous.

I await joyous surprises while working, an awakening of the materials that I work with and that my spirit develops.

I have a feeling only for shadows.

It is precisely from the regret left by the imperfect work that the next one can be born.

The artist yields often to the stimuli of materials that will transmit his spirit.

My originality consists in putting the logic of the visible to the service of the invisible.

Art can never support the propaganda of a belief or cult.

Gabriel Rosenstock

Gabriel Rosenstock, born 1949 in postcolonial Ireland. Bilingual poet, haikuist, tankaist, children's writer, essayist, novelist, short story writer, playwright and translator. Member Aosdána (Irish academy of arts & letters), Lineage Holder of Celtic Buddhism and, to borrow a phrase from Hugh MacDiarmid, 'a champion of forlorn causes'.

Among his awards is the Tamgha-i-Khidmat medal (Pakistan) for services to literature.

Gabriel's most recent titles are Glengower: Poems for No One in Irish and English (The Onslaught Press), Walk with Gandhi, illustrated by Masood Hussain (Gandhi 150 Ireland) and a bilingual edition in Sanskrit and Irish of a classic scripture, Gítá Ashtávakra (Everttype).

Some of the tanka in this book first appeared in The Culturium blog, September 2019.

Modern Literature (Chennai) has featured a tanka series by Rosenstock and an interview about his interest in the form.

